

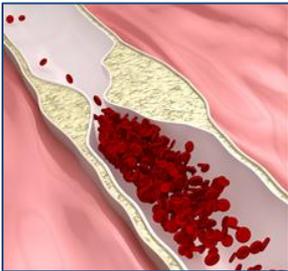
Stroke Treatment & Recovery

If you have a stroke, your doctors will work hard to restore normal blood flow to the brain. There are two basic types of treatment for stroke – medical or surgical. Your doctor will talk to you about the treatments that are best for you. The sooner treatment can be started, the better the chances of saving brain cells from permanent damage, so all strokes are treated as medical emergencies.

When you arrive in the Emergency Department, the doctors will need to know which kind of stroke you have: a blocked artery, or a broken bleeding artery. A CT scan of your head will be done to answer this question, and this will determine the type of treatment you will receive.



Ischemic Stroke Treatment

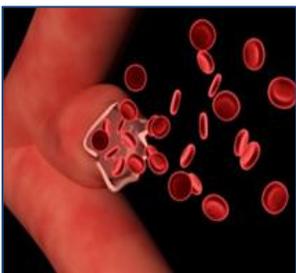


Ischemic stroke, the one that involves a blockage in the brain, can be treated several ways. One way is with a clot-busting drug called tPA. This is a medication given through an IV line that goes into the blood supply, gets to the blood clot that is blocking the blood flow in the brain, and breaks down the clot, washing it away. Since tPA can only be given for a short period of time after the beginning of the stroke symptoms, it's very important to get to the hospital immediately. If someone has signs of a stroke, always call 9-1-1 – even if the signs go away.

Another option for treating Ischemic stroke is to retrieve the clot that caused the blockage. This new procedure is done by a specially trained doctor who uses a device to remove the clot from the blood vessel in the brain.

Although they can't dissolve existing clots, your doctor may prescribe aspirin or other blood thinning medicines to help prevent new strokes.

Hemorrhagic Stroke Treatment

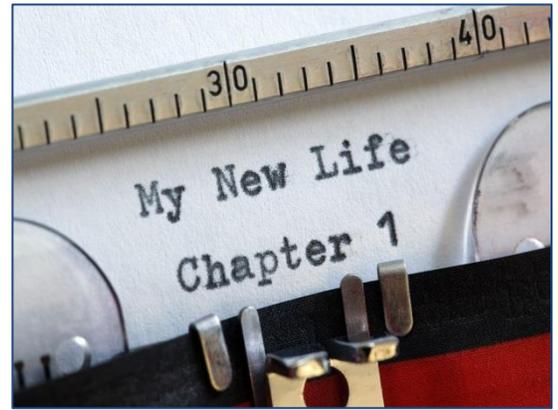


During hemorrhagic or bleeding stroke, the main goal of treatment is to find the cause of the hemorrhage and stop the bleeding. Very often there is a weakness in the wall of an artery caused by damage from high blood pressure, smoking, diabetes or cholesterol build-up. Sometimes there is an aneurysm, which is a part of the artery wall that is very thin and often bulges outward like a balloon. If your blood pressure is high, you will be given medications to lower your blood pressure first. Lowering the blood pressure may slow down bleeding and also prevent bleeding from starting again once it stops.

Once the blood pressure is safely lowered, the bleeding may be controlled by placing coils inside the bulging blood vessel to stop the bleeding. Your doctor may also apply a clip to the area of the blood vessel that is bleeding.

After a stroke, you may experience some or all of the following:

- Muscle weakness, paralysis or numbness
- Difficulty speaking or understanding others
- Decreased balance or coordination
- Memory loss or difficulty thinking
- Difficulty walking
- Difficulty with self care
- Difficulty swallowing
- Sadness and difficulty sleeping



Recovery from stroke is often a long process. In most cases, recovery involves adjusting to the “new normal.” To help you cope and recover from any difficulties you experience, your rehabilitation will begin as soon as possible after a stroke and will include help from many different health-care team members:

Doctors to manage your medical condition



Nurses to coordinate your daily care and education

Physical Therapy to get you out of bed and moving yourself

Occupational Therapy to help you learn self-care activities

Speech Therapy to help with communication and swallowing

Pharmacy to coordinate your medicines with your doctors

Nutrition to ensure you get the correct nutrition to recover your health

Case Management/Social Services to help you plan for return home

The goal of rehabilitation is to help you regain control of your movement as much as possible, along with enhancing your balance and coordination. You’ll learn exercises to work on these areas and make you stronger. You may need to learn new ways to do routine daily activities such as dressing and grooming. If your speech is affected after stroke, a major part of your recovery will include working with a speech therapist to help you re-learn language or help you learn other ways of communicating.

Another important part of your recovery is taking the medications that help reduce your chances of having another stroke. Take the medications exactly as prescribed, and contact your doctor if you are unable to take a medication.

You, your family members and caregivers will be involved in the care you receive every step along the way, both in the hospital and in the rehabilitation center if longer inpatient care is needed. It is possible to recover from stroke. Those patients who actively participate find that their recovery is easier and faster. Never hesitate to ask questions or to share your concerns about how the stroke has affected your lives. The stroke team is committed to helping you and your family adjust to the changes in your lives.

For more stroke information visit
houstonmethodist.org/stroke
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