

What is a Stroke

Chest
Heart &
Stroke

**WE'RE
ON YOUR
SIDE**

What is a Stroke?

Every **two hours** someone in **Northern Ireland** has a **stroke**, that's about **4,000** strokes **a year**.

A **stroke** happens when the **blood supply** to part of the **brain** is **interrupted** in some way.

If **brain cells** lose their supply of **oxygen** from the **blood**, they will be **damaged** or will die.

The **symptoms** of a stroke depend on the **part** of the **brain affected** and the extent of the **damage**.

So **no two strokes** are the **same** and **recovery** is **different** from person to person.



How does a Stroke Happen?

Most **strokes occur** when a **blood clot blocks** one of the **arteries** which carry blood to the brain.

This **type** of **stroke** is referred to as an **ischaemic** stroke, meaning there is **not enough** flow of **blood** to the **brain**.

The **blood clot** can either originate in one of the main **arteries** leading to the **brain**, or develop elsewhere in the body and get transported to the brain in the bloodstream.



Some **strokes** are caused by **bleeding** within or around the **brain** from a **burst blood vessel**.

This type of stroke is called a **haemorrhagic** stroke, haemorrhage is the **medical term** for **bleeding**.

In an **intracerebral haemorrhage**, the **bleeding** occurs **inside** the **brain** itself.

A **subarachnoid haemorrhage** is when a burst **blood** vessel bleeds into the **space** surrounding the **brain**.

The **blood presses** on the brain, **damaging** its delicate tissue. Meanwhile, other **brain cells** are starved of blood and are **damaged**.



What are the Symptoms of a Stroke?

The **symptoms** of a stroke usually **come** on **suddenly**, and can include:

- Weakness and numbness of the face, arm or leg usually on one side of the body
- Problems with balance and coordination
- Communication **problems** in **talking** or **understanding** what others are saying
- Difficulty **swallowing**
- Sudden **blurred vision** or loss of **sight**
- Severe **headache**



What is a Transient Ischaemic Attack?

A **transient ischaemic attack** (TIA) or ‘**mini-stroke**’ is a set of symptoms **similar** to those of a **stroke** but that last a **short time** and occur because of a **temporary** lack of **blood** to part of the **brain**.

It can last from a **few minutes** to a **few hours** but **symptoms** completely **disappear** within **24 hours**.

A **TIA** may not cause any serious illness. But it can be a **warning sign** of a more serious **stroke** and always **requires** immediate and further **medical attention**.



Act FAST

A stroke is a medical **EMERGENCY**. If you see the signs of a stroke act quickly and **call 999**. Early treatment saves lives and increases the chance of making a better recovery.

Northern Ireland Chest Heart & Stroke supports the FAST campaign.

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Facial weakness | Can the person smile?
Has their mouth or eye drooped? |
| Arm weakness | Can the person raise both arms?
Is one arm weak? |
| Speech problems | Can the person speak clearly and understand what you say? |
| Time to call 999 | If the person has failed any of these tests call 999 immediately. |

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Heart &
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