



# Stroke Explained

Chest  
Heart &  
Stroke

# 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** around 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** 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 serious illness. But 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.

## KNOW THE SYMPTOMS OF A STROKE...

# F

FACE - has their face fallen on one side? Can they smile?

# A

ARMS - can they raise both arms and keep them there?

# S

SPEECH - is their speech slurred?

# T

TIME to call 999 if you see any single one of these signs.

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