

## REHABILITATION

Getting the right help as quickly as possible can make a difference to a good recovery. A positive approach will help develop full potential. Start as soon as possible. A team approach is important.

- Physiotherapist
- Occupational therapist
- Speech therapist
- Social worker
- Vocational counsellor
- Medical doctors
- Nursing staff

As a Stroke affects different people in different ways, not every person will require the services of each person on the team listed above.

## WHERE TO GET HELP

**Provincial Hospitals** - Outpatient services

**Independent Living Centre** (Equipment & Information - disability discs for cars)  
Tel: 011 482 5474/5

**Rand Medical Supplies** incorporating left-hand shop  
Tel: 011 789 2203

### Support Groups

Stroke Aid: 011 728 2292 or [info@strokeaid.org.za](mailto:info@strokeaid.org.za)  
Headway Gauteng (General brain injuries)  
Tel: 011 442 5733

### Assessment and retraining for employment

Access College Tel: 011 402 3471

### Rehabilitation Centres

Life Healthcare - *New Kensington Clinic 011 614 7125*  
Netcare Tel: 011 489 1111

## WHAT IS STROKE AID?

Stroke Aid was founded in 1986 and is a multiracial self-help organisation for the support and the rehabilitation of Stroke patients. There are Support Groups in Norwood, Soweto & South Rand.

### Stroke Aid's aims:

- through support groups to encourage social interaction, promote independence and self confidence in Stroke patients and their families
- to provide an information service
- to increase public awareness
- to network with other similar organisations.

## HOW CAN YOU HELP?

- Financially – we rely completely on membership and public donation.
- Volunteer at our support groups.
- Assist with fundraising activities
- Help with the networking of information in other areas

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

Stroke Aid (PBO 930018543)  
Tel: 011 728 2292 Fax: 086 666 8154  
P O Box 51283, Raedene, Johannesburg 2124  
[www.strokeaid.org.za](http://www.strokeaid.org.za) e-mail: [info@strokeaid.org.za](mailto:info@strokeaid.org.za)

GENERAL INFORMATION

FOR THE PATIENT, FAMILY AND CAREGIVERS

# STROKE

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## WHAT IS STROKE?

Stroke is a 'brain attack' and as the name implies it is sudden. The main causes of a Stroke are a bleed or a clot:

- **Cerebral haemorrhage** - this occurs when a blood vessel within the brain ruptures.
- **Thrombosis** - this is caused by a clot resulting in a blockage/obstruction of the blood vessels.
- **Embolism** - when a fragment of blood clot or other substance, is carried in the circulation (blood supply) from another part of the body obstructs a blood vessel in the brain.

This causes brain tissue in the area to die. An area of the brain controls each part of the body and some higher functions like memory are controlled by many parts of the brain.

When one area is affected, the corresponding part of the body is affected. A stroke on the left side of the brain affects the right side of the body and vice-versa.

## 5 A STATISTICS

Strokes are common in South Africans over the age of 50 and occur equally among people of all races.

Strokes are however occurring more often in younger people and should not be considered only an old person's disease. This disturbing trend is attributed by specialists to unhealthy lifestyle habits of our modern society. It is also a consequence of the growing incidence of TB-related and opportunistic infections, particularly brain infections from HIV and Aids.

## THE EFFECT OF A STROKE

The effects will vary from person to person, depending on which area of the brain has been injured.

Frequently the effects are:

- paralysis or weakness involving the face, arm and leg on one side
- difficulty with speech and/or inability to communicate
- difficulty with swallowing and eating
- loss of bladder and bowel control
- loss or impairment of sensation
- partial loss of vision on one side
- loss of memory and limited concentration abilities
- loss of emotional control - mood changes, depression, frustration and fatigue.

## TIA'S - CONTACT YOUR DOCTOR

A person can have many small Strokes without being aware of them. These are called 'Transient Ischaemic Attacks' (TIA's) or Mini Strokes. Unlike Strokes they do not result in permanent brain damage but should not be ignored as more than one-third of all persons who experience TIA's will go on to have an actual Stroke. Warning signs are the same as for Stroke (see above) but typically last less than 24 hours.

## RECOVERY & PREVENTATIVE MEASURES

Recovery is dependant on your age, state of health, what type of Stroke you have had and how quickly you are able to get treatment. Less damaged brain cells may begin to improve, and undamaged brain cells can sometimes take over from damaged ones.

Preventative measures that can help recovery include controlling blood pressure, medication to thin the blood and lifestyle changes - a healthy diet, exercise and no smoking.

## COMMON QUESTIONS

### 'What are the chances of having another Stroke?'

*This is a real fear, which is best discussed with your doctor.*

### 'What can be done to prevent a recurrence?'

*Follow all medical advice carefully and adhere to any specific diet and medication recommended.*

### 'Will the person who has suffered from a Stroke recover fully?'

*The major amount of recovery will occur within the first few weeks after the stroke. However progress will be seen after this time, but the rate of improvement will be slower. Some symptoms of a stroke may recover spontaneously, while others may persist.*

### 'Does a stroke affect the family?'

*Undoubtedly a Stroke does affect the whole family, but family support is vital in the rehabilitation process. Groups like Stroke Aid provide valuable information and emotional support for the patient and family.*

### 'Will a persons sex life be affected?'

*Physical condition may impose some limitations but most patients may safely resume normal sexual relationships. Check with your doctor.*

### 'If we cannot manage to look after the patient, what will happen, i.e. Who will look after the patient?'

*Speak to your doctor, a social worker or call Stroke Aid for information on nursing homes or agencies.*

**THERE IS HOPE AFTER STROKE**

and

**STROKE AID**

is here to help you cope