

F.4 STROKE

'Stroke' is a rapid loss of brain function due to a disturbance in the blood supply to the brain. It can be the result of bleeding or when a blood clot leads to a blockage in a blood vessel to the brain, blocking the blood flow. As a result the affected brain part can't function normally and this might result in difficulty in moving, speaking, understanding, etc. Symptoms occur suddenly and depend on the area of the brain affected.

Strokes occur commonly in later life and in patients that suffer high blood pressure or other circulatory disorder

F.4.1 WHAT DO I SEE AND ENQUIRE?

You might observe following signs and symptoms:

- The person complains of numbness;
- The person complains of blurred vision;
- The person talks with a slurred speech;
- The person complains of severe headache;
- The person seems confused;
- You may observe:
 - weakness or paralysis of the limbs,
 - weakness or paralysis in the face.
- Sometimes the person might even have loss of consciousness.

The possibility of stroke should always be considered when there is:

- a sudden weakness or numbness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body; and/or
- a sudden trouble in speaking, seeing or understanding.

F.4.2 WHAT DO I DO?

1. If you think someone is suffering from a stroke, you can ask the person to perform three simple actions to check.

You can easily remember this via the mnemonic '**FAST**': Face – Arm – Speech and Transport.

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2. Ask the person to smile or to show his teeth.

Check whether the mouth is crooked or drooping at one corner.

There might be saliva dribbling out of the mouth.

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3. Ask the person to lift both arms.

Check whether he can do this without one arm dropping or drifting. Can he do this?
Is one arm lower than the other?

A stroke often causes one side of the body to become weak or even paralyzed.

The person might also have lost his balance.



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4. Ask the person to repeat a simple sentence after you. Check whether he can speak clearly or if he has problems in saying the words.

A stroke is very likely if the person has difficulties with any of the above actions.

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5. Arrange transport quickly. The earlier the person is treated, the better is the outcome. Try to find out when the problem started, note it down and report it.
6. If you think the person suffers from a stroke, the person urgently needs help. Shout or call for help if you are alone but do not leave the person unattended. Ask a bystander to seek help or to arrange urgent transport to the nearest healthcare facility. Tell him to come back to you to confirm if help has been secured.
7. If the person can sit up, make him to sit upright. This helps the person to breathe.
If the person cannot sit up, place him in the recovery position.
8. Comfort the person and explain what is happening. Tell the person to relax and rest.
9. He should not try to do anything.
10. Do not give food or drink to the person having a stroke. There is an increased risk of choking or vomiting.
11. Keep checking that the person is awake and breathing properly.
12. Arrange urgent transport to a healthcare facility.
13. Always wash your hands after taking care of a person. Use soap and water to wash your hands. If no soap is available, you can use ash to wash your hands. Alcohol-based sanitizers can also be used, if available.

F.4.2.1 WHAT DO I DO IF THE PERSON IS UNCONSCIOUS, BUT IS STILL BREATHING?

- a. Put the person in the recovery position.
- b. Continue to observe the victim and check his breathing

F.4.3 WHAT DO I DO WHEN THE PERSON STOPS BREATHING?

Start CPR.

Do not interrupt the resuscitation until:

- the person starts to wake up, moves, opens his eyes and breathes normally;
- help (trained on CPR) arrives and takes over;
- you become too exhausted to continue; or
- the area becomes unsafe for you to continue.

F.4.4 WHEN TO REFER TO A HEALTHCARE FACILITY?



Always arrange urgent transport to the nearest healthcare facility. This should be done even if the symptoms improve.