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# Ischemic Stroke

**Also called: Embolic Stroke, Thrombotic stroke**

## What is an ischemic stroke?

A stroke [<https://medlineplus.gov/stroke.html>] happens when there is a loss of blood flow to part of the brain. Your brain cells cannot get the oxygen and nutrients they need from blood, and they start to die within a few minutes. This can cause lasting brain damage, long-term disability, or even death.

There are two main types of strokes, ischemic and hemorrhagic [<https://medlineplus.gov/hemorrhagicstroke.html>]. Ischemic stroke is the more common type. An ischemic stroke happens when a blood clot [<https://medlineplus.gov/bloodclots.html>] blocks a blood vessel in the brain. Quick treatment can save a life and improve the chances of recovery.

## What causes an ischemic stroke?

Ischemic strokes are usually caused by one or more of the following:

- **A blood clot.** A clot can form in an artery that supplies the brain (thrombosis), or it can travel from another part of the body (embolism).
- **Atherosclerosis** [<https://medlineplus.gov/atherosclerosis.html>]. A disease in which plaque, a sticky substance made up of cholesterol, fat, and other substances, builds up inside your arteries.
- **Irregular heart rhythms.** Conditions like atrial fibrillation [<https://medlineplus.gov/atrialfibrillation.html>] can cause clots to form in the heart, which may travel to the brain.
- **Other heart and blood conditions.** Such as heart valve diseases [<https://medlineplus.gov/heartvalvediseases.html>] or sickle cell disease [<https://medlineplus.gov/sicklecelldisease.html>].

A transient ischemic attack [<https://medlineplus.gov/transientischemicattack.html>] (TIA) is caused by a brief blockage of blood flow to the brain. It usually lasts a few minutes. Having a TIA can mean you are at risk for having a more serious stroke.

## What are the symptoms of ischemic stroke?

Symptoms of stroke often happen suddenly. They include:

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg (especially on one side of the body)
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding speech
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden severe headache with no known cause

If you think someone is having a stroke, the **F.A.S.T.** test can help you remember what to look for. Think "FAST" and look for:

- **F**ace drooping on one side when smiling.
- **A**rm weakness that occurs when the arms are raised, and one arm drifts downward.
- **S**peech is slurred or strange.
- **T**ime to call 911.

## How is an ischemic stroke diagnosed?

To make a diagnosis, your health care provider may do a physical exam, ask about your symptoms and medical history, and use imaging tests [<https://medlineplus.gov/diagnosticimaging.html>] . Other heart tests [<https://medlineplus.gov/hearthealthtests.html>] may be done to help find the cause of the stroke.

## How is an ischemic stroke treated?

It is important to treat strokes as quickly as possible. The most common treatments include:

- **Medicines** such as blood thinners [<https://medlineplus.gov/bloodthinners.html>] or thrombolytics (which break up and dissolve existing clots) may be used to prevent or treat ischemic stroke.
- **Surgery or stenting** may be used to open narrowed arteries or remove plaque build-up from the carotid arteries, which supply blood to the brain.

After treatment, rehabilitation [<https://medlineplus.gov/strokerehabilitation.html>] can help you regain lost skills and independence. Your provider may also order other medicines to manage your blood pressure [<https://medlineplus.gov/bloodpressuremedicines.html>] , cholesterol [<https://medlineplus.gov/cholesterollevelswhatyouneedtoknow.html>] , or other health problems such as diabetes [<https://medlineplus.gov/diabetescomplications.html>] that may increase your risk for stroke.

## Can an ischemic stroke be prevented?

The best way to prevent stroke is by making heart-healthy lifestyle changes [<https://medlineplus.gov/howtopreventheartdisease.html>] to lower your risk. If lifestyle changes aren't enough, your provider may prescribe medicine to help manage your risk factors.

*NIH: National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke*

## Start Here

- Ischemic Stroke (Clots) [<https://www.stroke.org/en/about-stroke/types-of-stroke/ischemic-stroke-clots>] (American Stroke Association)
- Let's Talk about Ischemic Stroke [<https://www.stroke.org/en/help-and-support/resource-library/lets-talk-about-stroke/ischemic-stroke>] (American Stroke Association)  
Also in Spanish [<https://www.stroke.org/-/media/stroke-files/spanish-resources/lts-ischemic-stroke.pdf>]


## Prevention and Risk Factors

- **New!** Aspirin and Dual Antiplatelet Therapy [<https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/heart-attack/treatment-of-a-heart-attack/aspirin-and-heart-disease>] (American Heart Association)
- What Are Anticoagulants and Antiplatelet Agents? [<https://www.heart.org/-/media/files/health-topics/answers-by-heart/what-are-anticoagulants-and-antiplatelet-agents.pdf>] (American Heart Association) - **PDF**



## Related Issues

- Atherosclerosis and Stroke [<https://www.stroke.org/en/about-stroke/stroke-risk-factors/atherosclerosis-and-stroke>] (American Stroke Association)  
Also in Spanish [<https://www.stroke.org/es/about-stroke/stroke-risk-factors/atherosclerosis-and-stroke>]

## Specifics

- CADASIL [<https://www.ninds.nih.gov/health-information/disorders/cadasil>]  
 (National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke)  
Also in Spanish [<https://www.ninds.nih.gov/es/health-information/disorders/cadasil>]



## Genetics

- Adenosine deaminase 2 deficiency: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/adenosine-deaminase-2-deficiency/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
- Cerebral autosomal recessive arteriopathy with subcortical infarcts and leukoencephalopathy: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/cerebral-autosomal-recessive-arteriopathy-with-subcortical-infarcts-and-leukoencephalopathy/>]  (National Library of Medicine)

## Images

- Stroke - series [[https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100218\\_1.htm](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100218_1.htm)] (Medical Encyclopedia)  
Also in Spanish [[https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/esp\\_presentations/100218\\_1.htm](https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/esp_presentations/100218_1.htm)]

## Videos and Tutorials

- Stroke [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/anatomyvideos/000123.htm>]  (Medical Encyclopedia)  
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/anatomyvideos/000123.htm>]
- Stroke - secondary to cardiogenic embolism [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/anatomyvideos/000124.htm>]  (Medical Encyclopedia)  
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/anatomyvideos/000124.htm>]

## Statistics and Research

- Stroke Facts [<https://www.cdc.gov/stroke/data-research/facts-stats/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

## Clinical Trials

- ClinicalTrials.gov: Brain Ischemia [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Brain+Ischemia%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)
- ClinicalTrials.gov: Carotid Stenosis [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Carotid+Stenosis%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)
- ClinicalTrials.gov: Ischemic Stroke [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Ischemic+Stroke%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)

## Journal Articles

### References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)

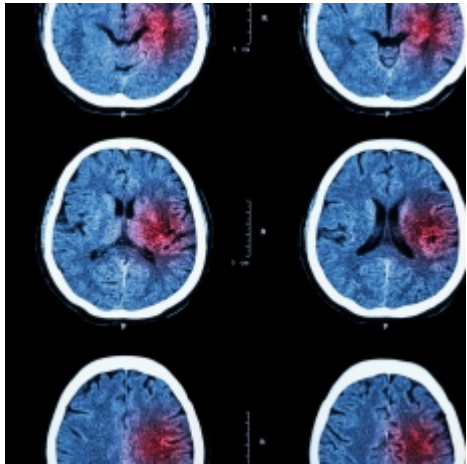
- Article: Intra-arterial selective hypothermia for acute ischemic stroke neuroprotection: A multicenter pilot... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40705740>]
- Article: Different light color temperatures in the morning on the effectiveness of... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40660285>]
- Article: Relationship Between Neutrophil Count and 90-Day Outcomes and Effect of Dual... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40654232>]
- Ischemic Stroke -- see more articles [<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Ischemic+Stroke%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND+%22last+1+Year%22+%5Bedat%5D+AND+%28patient+education+handout%5Bpt%5D+OR+guideline%5Bpt%5D+OR+clinical+trial%5Bpt%5D%29++NOT+%28letter%5Bpt%5D+OR+case+reports%5Bpt%5D+OR+editorial%5Bpt%5D+OR+comment%5Bpt%5D%29+AND+free+full+text%5Bsb%5D+>]

## Teenagers

- **New!** Young Adult Learns to Live After Ischemic Stroke [<https://www.stroke.org/en/about-stroke/types-of-stroke/ischemic-stroke-clots/melodys-story>] (American Stroke Association)

# Patient Handouts

- Carotid artery surgery - open [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/002951.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)  
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/002951.htm>]
- Preventing stroke [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000678.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)  
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000678.htm>]
- Stroke - discharge [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000132.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)  
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000132.htm>]
- Thrombolytic therapy [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007089.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)  
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/007089.htm>]



## MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

- Carotid artery surgery - open [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/002951.htm>]
- Stroke [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/anatomyvideos/000123.htm>]
- Stroke - secondary to cardiogenic embolism [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/anatomyvideos/000124.htm>]
- Stroke - series [[https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100218\\_1.htm](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100218_1.htm)]
- Thrombolytic therapy [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007089.htm>]

## Related Health Topics

- Hemorrhagic Stroke [<https://medlineplus.gov/hemorrhagicstroke.html>]
- Stroke [<https://medlineplus.gov/stroke.html>]
- Stroke Rehabilitation [<https://medlineplus.gov/strokerehabilitation.html>]

## National Institutes of Health

The primary NIH organization for research on *Ischemic Stroke* is the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke [<http://www.ninds.nih.gov/>]

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