Ischemic Stroke Packet

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INFIRMARY HEALTH
Ischemic Stroke

87% of strokes occur when blood vessels to the brain become narrowed or clogged with fatty deposits called plaque, cutting off blood flow to brain cells. A stroke caused by lack of blood reaching part of the brain is called an ischemic stroke. High blood pressure is the most important risk factor for ischemic stroke that you can change.

Are all ischemic strokes the same?

There are three types of ischemic strokes.

- **Thrombotic strokes** are caused by a blood clot (thrombus) in an artery going to the brain. The clot blocks blood flow to part of the brain. Blood clots usually form in arteries damaged by plaque.

- **Embolic strokes** are caused by a wandering clot (embolus) that’s formed elsewhere (usually in the heart or neck arteries). Clots are carried in the bloodstream and block a blood vessel in or leading to the brain.

- **Systemic hypoperfusion** (low blood flow) happens when the heart’s pumping action fails and too little blood reaches the brain. This is how a heart attack may cause a stroke.

How are ischemic strokes diagnosed?

When someone has shown symptoms of a stroke or a TIA (transient ischemic attack), a doctor will gather information and make a diagnosis. He or she will review the events that have occurred and will:

- get a medical history
- do a physical and neurological examination
- have certain laboratory (blood) tests done
- get a CT or MRI scan of the patient
- study the results of other diagnostic tests that might be needed

How are ischemic strokes treated?

**Acute treatment** is the immediate treatment given by the healthcare team when a stroke happens. The goal of acute treatment is to keep the amount of brain injury as small as possible.

The only FDA approved drug to treat ischemic stroke is tissue plasminogen activator (tPA). It is a clot busting drug. tPA must be given within 4.5 hours of the first symptoms of stroke. Medication may also be used to treat brain swelling that sometimes occurs after a stroke.

**Preventive treatment** may be given before or after a stroke happens. When someone has a stroke, they are at (continued)
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**Ischemic Stroke**

Risk of another. Once the medical team identifies what caused the stroke, they may prescribe treatments or procedures to reduce the risk of a second, such as:

- Antiplatelet agents such as aspirin and anticoagulants such as warfarin interfere with the blood’s ability to clot and can play an important role in preventing stroke.
- Carotid endarterectomy is a procedure in which blood vessel blockage is surgically removed from the carotid artery in the neck.
- Doctors sometimes use balloon angioplasty and implantable steel screens called stents to treat cardiovascular disease and reduce fatty buildup clogging a vessel that may make it easy for clots to form in the bloodstream.

Sometimes a stroke is the first sign a person has of other health conditions, such as high blood pressure, diabetes or atrial fibrillation (a heart rhythm disorder). If any of these are diagnosed, the healthcare team will prescribe appropriate treatment.

**HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?**

1. **Talk to your doctor, nurse or other healthcare professionals.** Ask about other stroke topics.
2. **Call 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653) or visit us at StrokeAssociation.org to learn more about stroke.**
3. **Call the American Stroke Association’s “Warmline” at 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653), and:**
   - Sign up for Stroke Connection, a free magazine for stroke survivors and caregivers.
   - Talk to other stroke survivors and caregivers and find local support groups.

**Do you have questions for the doctor or nurse?**

Take a few minutes to write your questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider.

For example:

**What can I do to help prevent another stroke?**

**What medications may I be given?**

Aspirin can play an important role in preventing stroke because it helps keep blood from clotting.
let's talk about
Risk Factors for Stroke

Knowing your risk factors is the first step in preventing stroke. You can change or treat some risk factors, but others you can’t. By having regular medical checkups and knowing your risk, you can focus on what you can change and lower your risk of stroke.

What risk factors can I change or treat?

• **High blood pressure.** This is the single most important risk factor for stroke because it’s the No. 1 cause of stroke. Know your blood pressure and have it checked at least once every two years. If it’s consistently 140/90 or above, it’s high. Talk to your doctor about how to manage it.

• **Tobacco use.** Tobacco use damages blood vessels. Don’t smoke and avoid second-hand smoke.

• **Diabetes mellitus.** Having diabetes increases your risk of stroke because it can cause disease of blood vessels in the brain. Work with your doctor to manage diabetes.

• **High blood cholesterol.** High blood cholesterol increases the risk of blocked arteries. If an artery leading to the brain becomes blocked, a stroke can result.

• **Physical inactivity and obesity.** Being inactive, obese, or both, can increase your risk of cardiovascular disease.

• **Carotid or other artery disease.** The carotid arteries in your neck supply most of the blood to your brain. A carotid artery damaged by a fatty buildup of plaque inside the artery wall may become blocked by a blood clot, causing a stroke.

• **Transient ischemic attacks (TIAs).** Recognizing and treating TIAs can reduce the risk of a major stroke. TIAs produce stroke-like symptoms but have no lasting effects. Know the warning signs of a TIA and seek emergency medical treatment immediately.

• **Atrial fibrillation or other heart disease.** In atrial fibrillation the heart’s upper chambers quiver rather than beating effectively. This causes the blood to pool and clot, increasing the risk of stroke. People with other types of heart disease have a higher risk of stroke, too.

• **Certain blood disorders.** A high red blood cell count makes clots more likely, raising the risk of stroke. Sickle cell anemia increases stroke risk because the “sickled” cells stick to blood vessel walls and may block arteries.

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Prevention

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Risk Factors for Stroke

• **Excessive alcohol intake.** Drinking an average of more than one drink per day for women or more than two drinks a day for men raises blood pressure. Binge drinking can lead to stroke.

• **Illegal drug use.** Intravenous drug use carries a high stroke risk. Cocaine use also has been linked to stroke. Illegal drugs commonly cause hemorrhagic strokes.

What are the risk factors I can’t control?

• **Increasing age.** Stroke affects people of all ages. But the older you are, the greater your stroke risk.

• **Gender.** In most age groups, more men than women have stroke, but more women die from stroke.

• **Heredity and race.** People whose close blood relations have had a stroke have a higher risk of stroke. African Americans have a higher risk of death and disability from stroke than whites, because they have high blood pressure more often. Hispanic Americans are also at higher risk of stroke.

• **Prior stroke.** Someone who has had a stroke is at higher risk of having another one.

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

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   • Sign up for Stroke Connection, a free magazine for stroke survivors and caregivers.
   • Talk to other stroke survivors and caregivers and find local support groups.

Do you have questions for the doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write your questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider.

For example:

- **What are my risk factors for stroke?**

- **What are the warning signs of TIA and stroke?**

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My Questions:
let’s talk about
Stroke, TIA and Warning Signs

Stroke occurs when a blood vessel bringing blood and oxygen to the brain gets blocked or ruptures. When this happens, brain cells don’t get the blood that they need. Deprived of oxygen, nerve cells stop working and die within minutes. Then, the part of the body they control can’t function either. The effects of stroke may be permanent depending on how many cells are lost, where they are in the brain, and other factors.

Stroke is the No. 4 cause of death and a leading cause of serious, long-term disability in America.

What is a TIA?

TIA, or transient ischemic attack, is a “minor stroke” that occurs when a blood clot blocks an artery for a short time. The symptoms of a TIA are the same as those of a stroke, but they usually last only a few minutes. About 15 percent of major strokes are preceded by TIAs, so don’t ignore a TIA. Call 9-1-1 or seek emergency medical attention immediately!

Isn’t stroke hopeless?

No. Stroke is largely preventable. You can reduce your stroke risk by living a healthy lifestyle — controlling high blood pressure; not smoking; eating a low-fat, low-cholesterol diet; being physically active; maintaining a healthy body weight; managing diabetes; drinking moderately or not at all.

Also, much is being done to fight the effects of stroke. For example, the FDA approved use of the clot-dissolving drug tissue plasminogen activator (tPA) to treat stroke. This is an advance because tPA can stop a stroke in progress and reduce disability. But to be eligible for tPA, you must seek emergency treatment right away, because it must be given within 4.5 hours after symptoms start, and have a clot-caused stroke.

What are warning signs of stroke?

You and your family should recognize the warning signs of stroke. You may have some or all of these signs. Note the time when symptoms start and call 9-1-1 or the emergency medical number in your area. Stroke is a medical emergency!

Don’t ignore these warning signs, even if they go away. Timing is important. There are treatments that can be considered within 4 1/2 hours of the onset of symptoms.

Stroke Warning Signs:

• Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg,

(continued)
Stroke, TIA and Warning Signs

especially on one side of the body

- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden severe headache with no known cause

Before you need to take emergency action, find out where the emergency entrance is to your nearest hospital. Also, keep a list of emergency phone numbers next to your phone and with you at all times, just in case. Take these steps NOW!

If you think you may be having a stroke, don’t hesitate... immediately call 9-1-1 or your emergency response number.

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

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   - Sign up for Stroke Connection, a free magazine for stroke survivors and caregivers.
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Do you have questions for the doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write your questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider.

For example:

Which facility close to me is best equipped to treat me if I am having stroke symptoms?

How can I reduce my risk for stroke?

My Questions:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one. Visit strokeassociation.org/letstalkaboutstroke to learn more.

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let's talk about
High Blood Pressure and Stroke

What is high blood pressure (HBP)?

High blood pressure means that the force of the blood pushing against the sides of your arteries is consistently in the high range. This can lead to stroke, heart attack, heart failure or kidney failure.

Two numbers represent blood pressure. The higher (systolic) number shows the pressure while the heart is beating. The lower (diastolic) number shows the pressure when the heart is resting between beats. The systolic number is always listed first.

A blood pressure reading of less than 120 over 80 is considered normal for adults. A blood pressure reading equal to or higher than 140 over 90 is high. Blood pressure between 120–139/80–89 is considered “prehypertension” and requires lifestyle modifications to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease.

How does high blood pressure increase stroke risk?

High blood pressure is the single most important risk factor for stroke because it’s the No. 1 cause of stroke.

HBP adds to your heart’s workload and damages your arteries and organs over time. Compared to people whose blood pressure is normal, people with HBP are more likely to have a stroke.

About 87 percent of strokes are caused by narrowed or clogged blood vessels in the brain that cut off the blood flow to brain cells. This is an ischemic stroke.

About 13 percent of strokes occur when a blood vessel ruptures in or near the brain. This is a hemorrhagic stroke. Chronic HBP or aging blood vessels are the main causes of this type of stroke.

Who is at higher risk?

• People with a family history of high blood pressure
• African Americans
• People 35 years or older
• People who are overweight or obese
• People who eat too much salt
• People who drink too much alcohol
• Women who use birth control pills
• People who aren’t physically active
• Pregnant women

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How can I control high blood pressure?

Even if you have had a prior stroke or heart attack, controlling high blood pressure can help prevent another one. Take these steps:

- Lose weight if you’re overweight.
- Eat a healthy diet that’s low in salt, saturated fat, trans fat and cholesterol.
- Eat fruits and vegetables, and fat-free or low-fat dairy products.
- Enjoy regular physical activity.
- Limit alcohol to no more than two drinks a day if you’re a man and one drink a day if you’re a woman. Check with your doctor about drinking alcohol; it can raise blood pressure.
- Take medicine as prescribed.
- Know what your blood pressure should be and try to keep it at that level.

MY QUESTIONS:

Do you have questions for the doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write your questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider. For example:

What should my blood pressure be?

How often should my blood pressure be checked?

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let’s talk about

Lifestyle Changes To Prevent Stroke

You can do plenty to make your heart and blood vessels healthy, even if you’ve had a stroke. A healthy lifestyle plays a big part in decreasing your risk for disability and death from stroke and heart attack.

How can I make my lifestyle healthier?
Here are steps to take to be healthier and reduce your risk of stroke:
• Don’t smoke and avoid second-hand smoke.
• Improve your eating habits. Eat foods low in saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol, sodium and added sugars.
• Be physically active.
• Take your medicine as directed.
• Get your blood pressure checked regularly and work with your healthcare provider to manage it if it’s high.
• Reach and maintain a healthy weight.
• Decrease your stress level.
• Seek emotional support when it’s needed.
• Have regular medical checkups.

How do I stop smoking?
• Make a decision to quit — and commit to stick to it.
• Ask your healthcare provider for information, programs and medications that may help.
• Fight the urge to smoke by going to smoke-free facilities. Avoid staying around people who smoke.
• Keep busy doing things that make it hard to smoke, like working in the yard.
• Remind yourself that smoking causes many diseases, can harm others and is deadly.
• Ask your family and friends to support you.

How do I change my eating habits?
• Ask your doctor, nurse or a licensed nutritionist or registered dietician for help.
• Be aware of your special needs, especially if you have high blood pressure, high cholesterol or diabetes.
• Avoid foods like egg yolks, fatty meats, butter and cream, which are high in fat and cholesterol.
• Eat moderate amounts of food and cut down on saturated fat, trans fat, sugar and salt.
• Bake, broil, roast and boil foods instead of frying.
• Read nutrition labels on packaged meals. Many are very high in sodium.
Prevention

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Lifestyle Changes To Prevent Stroke

- Limit alcohol to one drink a day for women; two drinks per day for men.
- Eat more fruit, vegetables, whole-grains, dried peas and beans, pasta, fish, poultry and lean meats.

What about physical activity?
- If you have a medical condition, check with your doctor before you start.
- Start slowly and build up to at least 2 1/2 hours of moderate physical activity (such as brisk walking) a week.
- Look for even small chances to be more active. Take the stairs instead of an elevator and park farther from your destination.

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Do you have questions for the doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write your questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider.

For example:

- What is the most important change I can make?
- What kind of physical activity can I do safely?

My Questions:

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Stroke Resources

General Stroke Resources
• American Heart Association  800-AHA-USA1  www.americanheart.org
• Consult your doctor, local hospital, clinic or healthcare professional

Blood Pressure & Cholesterol
• American Heart Association’s High Blood Pressure Website  www.americanheart.org/hbp
• American Heart Association’s The Cholesterol Low Down™  www.americanheart.org/cld

Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)
• American Heart Association CPR&ECC  877-AHA-4CPR  www.americanheart.org/cpr

Diabetes
• American Heart Association’s Heart of Diabetes™  www.americanheart.org/diabetes
• National Diabetes Education Program  www.ndep.nih.gov
• American Diabetes Association  800-232-3472  www.diabetes.org

Physical Activity & Weight Control
• American Heart Association’s Fitness Website  www.justmove.org
• American Dietetic Association  312-899-0040  www.eatright.org
(Visit the “Food & Nutrition Information” Section)

Smoking
• American Cancer Society  800-227-2345  www.cancer.org
• American Lung Association  212-315-8700  www.lungusa.org

Spanish
• American Heart Association En Espanol  www.americanheart.org
(Visit “EnEspanol” on the left menu bar)

Local (Mobile & Baldwin County Resources)
• Mobile Infirmary Stroke Support Group: Community based support group that meets monthly at ProHealth. For more information contact: Sheila Ross  251-435-3034
• South Alabama Regional Stroke Support Group: Community-based support group that meets monthly at USA Medical Center. For more information contact: Stroke Coordinator  251-471-7752
• Body Recall: Exercise classes designed for stroke recovery. Classes are held at ProHealth. A variety of class times are available. For more information call ProHealth  251-435-2010
• Via Solutions: Program & activities for seniors located at 1718 Dauphin Street. For more information call  251-478-3311
• Area Agency on Aging: Offers a variety of services from transportation to personal care. For more information call  251-433-6541 or 1-800-243-5463