

CEREBROVASCULAR ACCIDENT

- Also known as: Stroke, brain attack
- Description: A stroke occurs when there is a disruption of oxygenated blood supply to the brain. Ischemic stroke, the most common form, occurs when an artery carrying blood to the brain is blocked. Causes of blockage include narrowing of the arteries due to atherosclerosis or a blood clot (thrombus or embolus). Hemorrhagic stroke occurs when an artery carrying blood to the brain ruptures, either due to traumatic injury or as a result of an aneurysm that has ruptured. Interruption of blood flow causes brain cell damage due to the lack of oxygen. Resulting symptoms of a stroke can be temporary or permanent and range from mild to severe.
- Clinical presentation
 - Changes in level of consciousness
 - Unilateral facial drooping
 - Sudden numbness, decrease, or loss of function of the face, arm, or leg, usually affecting one side of the body
 - Sudden severe headache
 - Vision disturbances
 - Unequal pupils
 - Vertigo
 - Loss of balance or coordination
 - Sensory disturbances (hearing, taste, smell, vision, touch)
 - Mental confusion
 - Difficulty speaking or swallowing
 - Loss of bowel and/or bladder control
- Management: Health care providers should offer immediate care to the stroke patient by protecting the airway, assessing vital signs, performing a detailed history and physical exam, and administering high flow oxygen, if trained. Early recognition and treatment usually improves patient outcome, especially in ischemic stroke. Stroke assessment scales, such as the Cincinnati Stroke Scale, can be useful in