Cerebrovascular Accident (Stroke)

A stroke means you have a brain injury from blocked circulation or bleeding in the brain. Blocked circulation usually comes from a clot. The symptoms of a stroke depend on the area of brain that is affected.

Symptoms can include:

- Problems with speech and vision.
- Paralysis (inability to move parts of your body).
- Loss of balance.
- Dizziness.
- Numbness.
- Headache or fainting.

If your problems have lasted over 3 hours, treatment with drugs to dissolve blood clots in the brain is not helpful. It can be dangerous.

The main goals in treating a CVA include measures to prevent complications. Treatment is also started to reduce the risk of future strokes. About 70% of stroke victims have high blood pressure. Other risks for stroke include cigarette smoking, heart disease, high cholesterol and diabetes.

Symptoms of a stroke may progress or change over the first several days.

Tests that help prove the diagnosis of a CVA include:

- CT and MRI scans.
- Ultrasound examinations.
- Scans of the brain circulation.

Recovery depends on the location and size of the damaged area. It also depends on whether other brain tissue can take over the job. Medicines to control headache and nausea are helpful. **Taking one adult aspirin daily has been shown to decrease the risk of further strokes.** Rehabilitation therapy is also helpful**.**

If control of the bladder has been lost, an internal or condom catheter may be used. If swallowing is difficult, tube feedings may be necessary. Prevention of strokes includes smoking cessation, controlling blood pressure and treating elevated blood sugar and cholesterol levels. Regular exercise such as walking has also been shown to be beneficial. Sometimes blood thinners may be necessary.

Surgery to remove blood clots or to open up blocked arteries may be necessary in some patients. Call your caregiver or the **Stroke Association (1-800-787-6537)** if you or your family has any questions about your condition or treatment.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Blood thinners may be used to prevent another stroke. Blood thinners need to be used exactly as instructed. Medicines may also be used to control risk factors for a stroke. Be sure you understand all your medication instructions.
- Follow all instructions for follow-up with your caregiver. This includes any referrals, physical therapy, and rehabilitation. Any delay in obtaining necessary care could result in a delay or failure of the damage from the stroke to heal properly or prevent another stroke form occurring.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You have marked worsening in paralysis, numbness, speech, or alertness.
- You develop seizures, severe headache, confusion, or blurred vision.
- You develop chest or abdominal pain or shortness of breath
- You have repeated vomiting
- You have falls, or other serious injuries or complaints.

ANY OF THESE SYMPTOMS MAY REPRESENT A SERIOUS PROBLEM THAT IS AN EMERGENCY. Do not wait to see if the symptoms will go away. Get medical help at once. Call your local emergency services (911 in the U.S.). DO NOT drive yourself to the hospital.

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