

HHT & STROKE



IN COLLABORATION WITH
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FACTSHEET
FS

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WHAT IS A STROKE:

A stroke is a sudden disruption of blood flow to part of the brain. When blood flow is interrupted, the brain does not get enough oxygen and some of the tissue dies.

Strokes can be caused by bleeding into the brain (hemorrhagic) or by a blocked blood vessels in the brain (ischemic).

Strokes can cause a variety of problems with movement, speaking, seeing, thinking, emotions and behavior, depending on how large it is and what part of the brain is damaged.



The Cornerstone of
the HHT Community

HHT Foundation International Inc.
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HHT & STROKE:

WHAT CAUSES A STROKE?

- › Strokes are very common and most are not related to HHT. There are about 800,000 new strokes each year in the U.S. alone.
- › Risk factors for stroke include: family history of a stroke, high blood pressure, smoking, diabetes, obesity, sedentary lifestyle, and high cholesterol. Older people are more likely to have a stroke than younger ones and African Americans have more strokes than Caucasians. Some strokes are caused by heart, brain or blood vessel defects, which may not cause any symptoms until the stroke occurs.

HOW DOES HHT CAUSE A STROKE?

- › A brain AVM that bursts and bleeds into the brain causes a hemorrhagic stroke.
- › Pulmonary AVMs interfere with the lung's ability to filter out clots and debris. If a blood clot passes through an AVM in the lungs, it can travel to the brain and cause an ischemic stroke.

WHAT ARE SOME COMMON PROBLEMS AFTER A STROKE?

- › Weakness or paralysis, usually on one side of the body
- › Language/communication difficulties
- › Thinking/reasoning impairments
- › Changes in emotions and mood
- › Behavior and personality changes
- › Depression
- › Barriers to participating in life (stairs, lack of transportation, negative attitudes)
- › Family role and relationship changes

CAN YOU RECOVER FROM A STROKE?

- › The good news is: everyone who survives a stroke gets **some** recovery
- › The amount of recovery depends on the extent of damage and other factors
- › Recovery may be most rapid for the first 6 months to a year, but **can continue for many years**
- › Children often recover more fully than adults
- › Rehabilitation therapies, exercise and social support enhance recovery

HOW CAN YOU PREVENT HHT-RELATED STROKES?

- › Get screened for lung AVMS. If you have them, get treatment and take prophylactic antibiotics before dental procedures. Ask for a filter when you get an IV, to prevent air bubbles from getting into your blood.
- › Get screened for brain AVMS. If you have one, discuss treatment options with an expert.
- › Regular follow-up is essential in reducing the risk of stroke if you have AVMS in your lungs or brain.

HOW CAN YOU LOWER YOUR RISK FOR ALL STROKES?

- › Exercise regularly
- › Maintain a normal body weight
- › Don't smoke (or stop smoking)
- › If you have high blood pressure, control it with medication prescribed by your doctor
- › If you have diabetes, keep your blood sugar under good control

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO LIVE BETTER WITH A STROKE?

- › Get the best rehabilitation therapies available
- › Take an active role in family life
- › Stay socially active with your friends and community
- › Do something meaningful to you (e.g. volunteer work, art work, political campaigning)
- › If you are depressed, get treatment as soon as possible
- › Use community supports and resources
- › Have some fun everyday

RESOURCES FOR LIVING WITH A STROKE:

Associations (for information, support and advocacy):

- › National Stroke Association
www.stroke.org
- › American Stroke Association
www.strokeassociation.org

Community Supports:

Stroke Clubs (see links below to find a stroke club/ support group near you)

- › http://portal.stroke.org/a_supportgroupsearch
- › <http://strokeassociation.org/STROKEORG/strokegroup/public/zipFinder.jsp>

HHT Foundation Regional Networking Alliance

- › www.hht.org



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