

Having a bleed in the brain

Hemorrhagic stroke

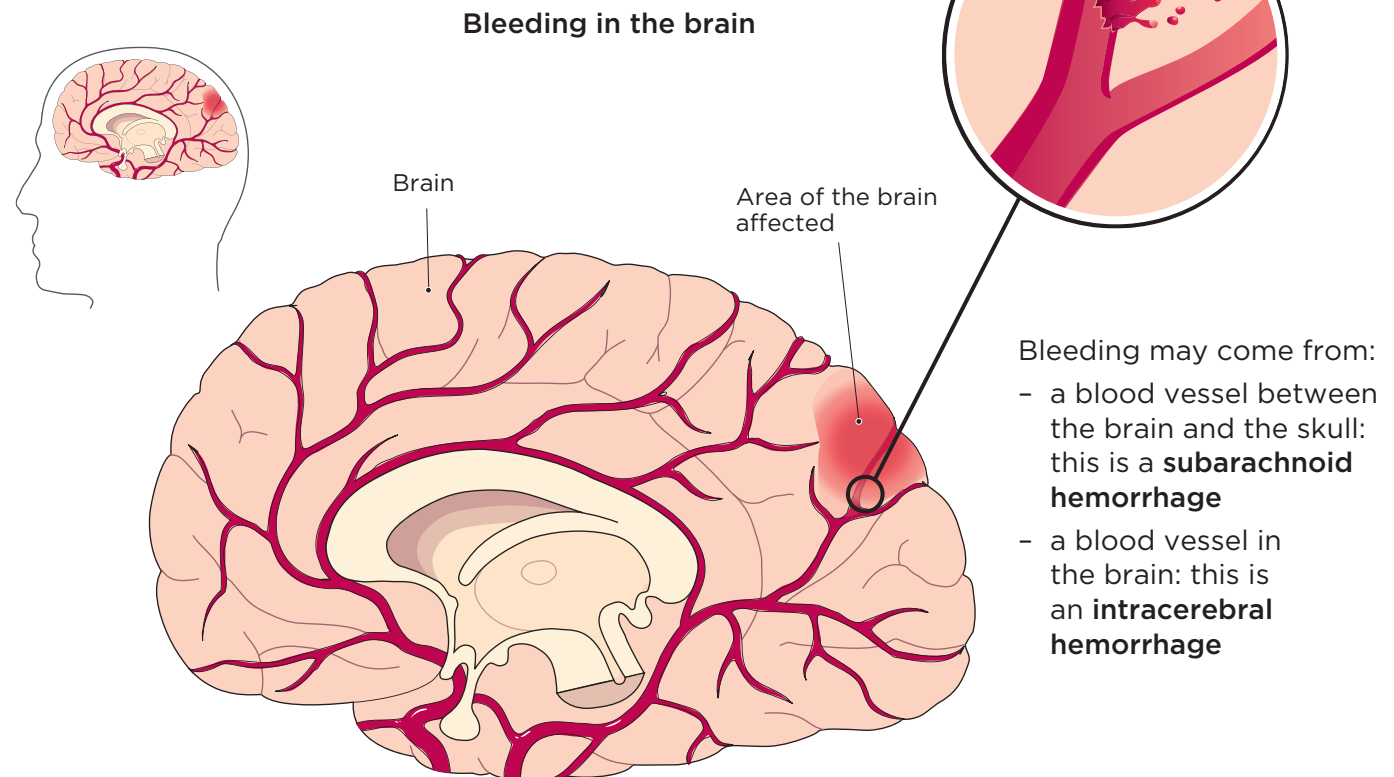


You have just suffered a hemorrhagic stroke. A blood vessel in your brain has burst, which caused bleeding. This fact sheet will help you understand what is happening to you and what you can do about it.

What is this problem?

This bleeding was caused by a blood vessel that burst in the brain. This leads to brain cells dying due to:

- lack of oxygen (blood no longer reaches certain areas)
- a build-up of blood at the site of the bleed, which compresses the brain



What are the main causes of this problem?

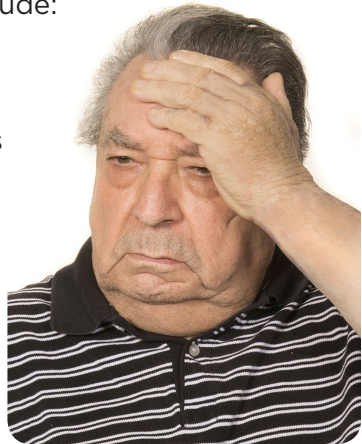
- High blood pressure (hypertension).
- Diabetes.
- Certain medications (such as blood thinners) or drugs.
- Blood vessels can have an abnormal shape (malformations or aneurysms). This weakens them, and sometimes they can burst.

Some factors increase the risk of having a stroke: a family history of stroke, and being older.

What are the main symptoms?

Possible symptoms include:

- sudden, very strong headache
- loss of consciousness
- agitation or sudden change in behaviour
- vomiting
- nausea
- dizziness
- difficulty swallowing
- weakness or paralysis on the left side (face, arm, or leg, for example)
- difficulty reading, writing, speaking, thinking, and calculating
- needing instructions to do a simple task (such as hand washing)
- a problem called “neglecting”: forgetting objects, people, and even your own limbs on the left



- you may not realize you have this problem (a phenomenon called anosognosia) and you may get upset because you're unable to do something (such as opening a door or walking).

Learn the signs and symptoms of stroke so you can react immediately if you ever have another stroke: **FAST**

FAST

Face (is it drooping?)

Arm weakness (are you unable to lift both arms to the same height?)

Speech problems (is your speech slurred?)

Time to call **911** (extreme emergency)

What are the possible long-term effects of a stroke?

A stroke can change your life and the lives of your loved ones. You may have difficulty doing simple activities of daily living: eating, dressing, bathing, using the bathroom, making phone calls, doing household chores, getting around, etc.

It could also affect:

- > Morale: emotions, mood, behaviours, thinking, organization
- > Memory
- > Physical abilities: hand, arm and leg mobility, balance, bowel and bladder control, senses and perceptions
- > Ability to communicate: understand a message, speak, articulate or produce sounds
- > Fatigue

Recovering from a stroke takes a lot of effort. There are ups and downs. Don't be afraid to ask for help and talk about your concerns.

What tests or exams might I have?

When you arrive at the hospital, you may have:

- a complete physical exam
- blood and urine tests
- in rare cases, heart function tests (electrocardiogram and echocardiogram)
- imaging exams (scans, MRI, angiography, etc.) to look at your brain and how the blood is flowing through it, etc.

How is this illness treated?

In the first hours after a stroke, the team will try to:

- find out what is happening to you (diagnosis)
- stabilize your condition
- treat you as quickly as possible

Sometimes stroke can be treated with different operations:

- Removing the build-up of blood in your head. This is done under general anesthesia (you're put to sleep) and the skull must be opened.
- Putting small metal springs or tiny particles into the abnormal vessels (endovascular embolization). This blocks them or makes them more solid. There is no need to open the skull. The doctor passes a small flexible tube (catheter) from the groin to the vessels to be repaired.
- Repairing the abnormal vessels with a high dose of high-energy radiation (radiosurgery).



How do I take care of myself in the first few days after a stroke in the hospital?

- Maintain bed rest.
- Wear compression stockings, if prescribed by the doctor.
- Change position and get out of bed carefully with the help of a member of the care team.
- Drink and eat as instructed by the care team. They will first need to check whether you have any trouble swallowing. See the fact sheet [Detecting problems with swallowing](#).
- Follow the care team's instructions. They will encourage you to gradually resume your personal hygiene care and activities.



The team will plan your follow-up care with you and your family (rehabilitation, hospital discharge, your return home).

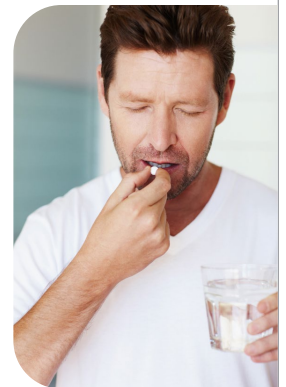
Will my medications be adjusted after the stroke?

If you were taking any medications (diabetes, blood pressure, coagulation, etc.), your doses may be changed.

You may also be given new ones to take. If so, the doctor and the nurse will advise you.

Medications can also be used to reduce the risk of another stroke. They are designed to:

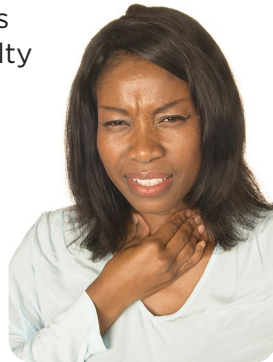
- lower blood pressure (antihypertensive drugs)
- control head and neck pain (painkillers)
- reduce the stress and agitation that can increase blood pressure (sedatives)



What symptoms should I watch for?

Tell the nurse if you have any new symptoms or if your symptoms get stronger. For example:

- nervous system symptoms (such as weakness, difficulty speaking, or dizziness)
- pain
- headache
- heartburn (nausea)
- tingling in the throat
- difficulty breathing
- symptoms already present that get worse
- feeling sleepy (drowsiness)
- confusion
- loss of balance



What can I do to prevent another stroke?

Here are some things you can do to reduce the risks:

- Stop smoking, if you haven't already.
- Eat a balanced diet, low in fat and salt. Consult a nutritionist as needed.
- Exercise for 20 minutes, 5 times a week.
- Take blood pressure medication, if prescribed by your doctor.
- If you have diabetes, monitor it by checking your blood sugar level regularly.
- Lose weight, if necessary.
- Take precautions to prevent falls and head injuries.
- Reduce stress.
- Treat your sleep apnea, if applicable.



Who can I contact for help or to ask questions?

At the hospital

Your care team can answer your questions.

After your return home

As a CHUM patient, you can call a CHUM nurse:

> **514 890-8086**

> **This service is available 24 hours/day, 7 days/week**

You can also contact a nurse in the Neurosciences Outpatient Centre, Monday to Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.:

> **514 890-8123**

To cancel or change an appointment, call the Neurosciences Outpatient Centre, Monday to Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.:

> **514 890-8123**



USEFUL RESOURCES

Heart & Stroke Foundation of Canada:

> **1 800 567-8563 (in Québec)**

> **heartandstroke.ca**

Other health sheets published by the CHUM are available. Ask for those that might fit your situation.



You can also find them on our web site

chumontreal.qc.ca/fiches-sante

The content of this document in no way replaces the recommendations and diagnoses made, or the treatment suggested by your health professional.

To find out more about the Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal
chumontreal.qc.ca