

## Recognising the signs of a stroke

The signs and symptoms of a stroke vary from person to person, but usually begin suddenly.

As different parts of your brain control different parts of your body, your symptoms will depend on the part of your brain affected and the extent of the damage.

The main stroke symptoms can be remembered with the word **F.A.S.T.:**

- Face – the face may have dropped on 1 side, the person may not be able to smile, or their mouth or eye may have drooped.
- Arms – the person with suspected stroke may not be able to lift both arms and keep them there because of weakness or numbness in 1 arm.
- Speech – their speech may be slurred or garbled, or the person may not be able to talk at all despite appearing to be awake; they may also have problems understanding what you're saying to them.
- Time – it's time to dial 999 immediately if you notice any of these signs or symptoms.

It's important for everyone to be aware of these signs and symptoms, particularly if you live with or care for somebody in a high-risk group, such as someone who is elderly or has diabetes or high blood pressure.

### **Other possible symptoms**

Symptoms in the F.A.S.T. test identify most strokes, but occasionally a stroke can cause different symptoms.

Other symptoms and signs may include:

- complete paralysis of 1 side of the body
- sudden loss or blurring of vision
- dizziness
- confusion
- difficulty understanding what others are saying
- problems with balance and co-ordination
- difficulty swallowing (dysphagia)
- a sudden and very severe headache resulting in a blinding pain unlike anything experienced before
- loss of consciousness

But there may be other causes of these symptoms.

**Transient ischaemic attack (TIA)**

The symptoms of a TIA, also known as a mini-stroke, are the same as a stroke, but tend to only last between a few minutes and a few hours before disappearing completely.

Although the symptoms do improve, a TIA should never be ignored as it's a serious warning sign of a problem with the blood supply to your brain.

It means you're at an increased risk of having a stroke in the near future.

It's important to phone 999 immediately and ask for an ambulance if you or someone else have TIA or stroke symptoms.

Even if the symptoms disappear while you're waiting for the ambulance to arrive, an assessment in a hospital should still be carried out.

If you think you have had a TIA previously, but the symptoms have since passed and you did not seek medical advice at the time, make an urgent appointment with your GP.

They can refer you for a hospital assessment, if appropriate.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stroke/symptoms/>