



HM Government

NHS

The first sign of a stroke
might not seem like much.
Like, struggling to smile,

or not being able
to raise your arm,

or slurring
when you speak.

**But any sign of a stroke
is always an emergency.**

Face or arm or speech, at the first sign,
it's time to call 999.

**Act
FAST**

**Help us
help you**



A stroke strikes every five minutes. Every year in the UK, there are around 100,000 strokes, causing 38,000 stroke-related deaths, and it is a leading cause of disability.

The first sign of a stroke might not seem like much. You may not be able to raise your arm, or struggle to smile, or slur when you speak. Even if it doesn't seem like it, any sign of stroke is always an emergency.

It's important to know that stroke symptoms can be less dramatic, painful or obvious than you might expect.

Stroke is a medical emergency that requires immediate attention as every minute is vital. Acting FAST by calling 999 helps to ensure stroke patients get timely access to specialist treatments that can be lifesaving and reduce long-effects such as disability.

Main signs of a stroke

Face weakness – it might be hard to smile, and one side of your face may droop (fall).

Arm weakness – you may not be able to fully lift both arms and keep them there because of weakness or numbness in one arm.

Speech problems – you may slur your words or sound confused.

Other symptoms that could be the first sign you or someone else is having a stroke include:

- Sudden weakness or numbness on one side of your body (including in your leg).

- Sudden loss of vision or blurred vision in one or both eyes.
- Sudden difficulty speaking or thinking of words.
- Sudden memory loss or confusion.
- Experiencing a sudden, severe headache.
- Sudden dizziness, unsteadiness or a fall, especially when coupled with any of the other signs.

Who is at risk of a stroke?

A stroke can happen to anyone, but overall risk can increase if:

- You're over 50 years old.
- You have diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol or an irregular and fast heartbeat (atrial fibrillation).
- You're from a Black or South Asian background. This is partly because high blood pressure and diabetes are more common in these groups.

It is important that these conditions are carefully monitored and treated to reduce your risk of having a stroke.

In addition, specific lifestyle changes, such as combining a healthy diet with regular exercise, can help to protect you against stroke.

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