

## explainity explains: a stroke

It all happened so fast. Maya's right arm suddenly went numb, and she slumped to the ground. Diagnosis: a stroke. But what does that mean exactly?

In a stroke, the supply of oxygen and nutrients to the brain is disrupted. As a result, brain cells die. A stroke can have different causes.

The two most common causes are when a blood clot, or thrombus either blocks blood vessels in the brain, or bursts a blood vessel and causes a brain hemorrhage. There can be many reasons for this, like cardiac arrhythmia, high blood pressure, a blood clot in the heart, or lipid metabolism disorders.

The symptoms vary depending on the severity and the affected area: acute weakness, numbness, or paralysis, mostly on just one side of the body, speech problems, vision problems, headaches and dizziness, and even loss of consciousness.

Women can also have unusual symptoms like: nausea, breast or limb pain, difficulty swallowing and shortness of breath, or drowsiness.

A stroke often causes irreversible damage. And if medical assistance gets there too late, it can also lead to death.

That's why the **FAST** test helps to detect a stroke quickly. In other words, have the affected person's **face**, **arms** or **speech** gone numb or noticeably changed?

The test involves asking the person to smile, stretch out their arms with their palms facing up, and say something. If it's a stroke, they will usually not be able to do everything. It's then **time** to act immediately and call an ambulance. Every second counts to prevent brain cells from dying. Blood-thinning drugs are usually given at the scene.

In the hospital, a brain scan is then used to locate the affected area. If there's a clot, this area can also be treated straight away with a catheter to remove the blockage. Major bleeds require more extensive surgery. Acute care is followed by therapy for the affected organs or body parts.

Targeted rehabilitation, first in hospital and then in a rehab clinic, should help Maya to move her arm again. The brain cells and capabilities that she lost must literally be retrained. In rehab, patients also learn, despite their impairment, to get back to daily life.

By the way, a stroke is not a matter of age and can, like in Maya's case, happen when you're young. That's why you should have regular check-ups and take the symptoms seriously.

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