What is Stroke?

For enquiries and appointments, please contact us at:

**Neurology Centre**

10/F, Li Shu Pui Block, Hong Kong Sanatorium and Hospital
2 Village Road, Happy Valley, Hong Kong
Tel: 2835 7689
Fax: 2892 7569
Email: neurology@hksh-hospital.com

**Service Hours (By appointment only)**
Closed on Sundays and Public Holidays

www.hksh-hospital.com

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Stroke is due to Cerebrovascular Disease. It is caused by “blockage” or “rupture” of brain blood vessels, leading to insufficient oxygen supply to the brain and hence damage to the brain cells. Body functions would therefore be affected.

One in six people worldwide will suffer a stroke in their lifetime. Stroke claims an average of more than three thousand lives every year. It is the number four killer in Hong Kong and is the second leading cause of death in the Mainland.

Types of Stroke

1. Haemorrhagic Stroke

   It results from a weakened vessel that ruptures and bleeds into the surrounding brain areas. The blood accumulates and compresses the surrounding brain tissues.

2. Ischaemic Stroke

   (i) Cerebral Infarction

   Ischaemic stroke occurs as a result of an obstruction within a blood vessel supplying blood to the brain, resulting in permanent damage of brain tissues.

   (ii) Transient Ischaemic Attack (TIA)

   Commonly known as “mini stroke”, TIA is caused by a temporary blockage of a brain vessel. Symptoms may resolve without treatment within 24 hours. Unlike a stroke, TIA usually causes no permanent injury to the brain.
Risk Factors

- Increasing age
- Hypertension
- Diabetes
- High cholesterol level
- Heart Diseases: Atrial Fibrillation, Rheumatic Heart Disease, Coronary Heart Disease, etc.
- History of transient minor stroke or stroke
- Obesity
- Lack of exercise
- Smoking
- Alcoholism
- Family history of stroke

Symptoms

- Sudden onset of numbness or weakness on one side of the body
- Difficulty in speech or in understanding conversation
- Problems with swallowing or facial asymmetry
- Sudden impaired vision or visual field defect
- Sudden dizziness, vertigo or loss of balance
- Sudden severe headache

Complications

- Pneumonia
- Swallowing impairment
- Pressure ulcer
- Frozen shoulder
- Retention of urine
- Constipation
- Gastrointestinal bleeding
- Brain swelling
- Epilepsy

Recurrence Risk

- According to research, 10% of stroke patients would have recurrent stroke or transient minor stroke within one year without appropriate treatment
- 20% of transient minor stroke patients will suffer a severe stroke within the first three months
- Recurrent stroke occurs in 40% of patients within five years

Prevention

- Know about and control risk factors for stroke
- Control blood pressure and blood sugar
- Avoid salty and fatty food
- Stop smoking
- Avoid excessive alcohol
- Regular exercise
- Drug compliance
- Female smokers or hypertensive women should not use contraceptive pills
Treatment of Stroke

Doctors of the Neurology Centre will conduct timely and comprehensive evaluations for stroke patients to delineate the exact type and severity of stroke. Treatment plan is then formulated based on one’s condition to achieve the best possible clinical outcomes.

Ischaemic Stroke
1. Thrombolytic
   * Must be administered to patients within 3 hours (may be up to 4.5 hours in some patients)
2. Anti-platelets
   * Aspirin
   * Clopidogrel
3. Anti-coagulants
   * Heparin
   * Warfarin
   * New oral anticoagulants

Haemorrhagic Stroke
1. Conservative treatment
   * Surgical intervention not beneficial to most patients
   * Based on the cause of haemorrhage, specific treatment may be needed to reduce further bleeding
2. Surgical Intervention
   * May be life-saving in special conditions

Beat Stroke, Act FAST

FAST
Seek immediate medical attention at a hospital when you are aware of any stroke symptoms!

FACE
Asymmetrical facial expressions

ARM
Weakness in the arms

SPEAK
Difficulties in communication

TIME
Call for emergency

Source: Hong Kong Stroke Society