

What is it?

A stroke occurs when the blood supply to the brain is blocked. There are two main types of stroke:

- **Haemorrhagic** – caused by a blood vessel in the brain that breaks and bleeds. This type accounts for around 15% of strokes.
- **Ischaemic** – caused by a blocked artery. This type accounts for around 80% of strokes.

Both types of stroke need treatment. Strokes can be mild, severe or even fatal. The impact and symptoms depend on the part of the brain the stroke affects. Strokes can impact the way you behave, your thoughts and your feelings. In many cases, you can prevent strokes by living a healthy lifestyle. Common causes of strokes include high blood pressure, being overweight or obese, smoking, high cholesterol, drinking too much and diabetes. Your GP will help you make a healthy lifestyle plan and learn how to reduce your risk.

What will my GP do now?

Your GP will talk to you about how to manage your heart disease risk factors. They may suggest you see a specialist for more tests. Your GP may also discuss healthy living tips, like:

- Quitting smoking
- Weight loss
- Drinking safe amounts
- Exercise
- Safe driving
- Rehabilitation

What will my GP do in the future?

Your GP may see you in three months to check your health. Your GP may:

- Keep helping you reduce your risk factors
- Talk to you about how to check for signs of a mini-stroke
- Give you support for rehab so you can live independently
- Help you sort out any workplace issues
- Check in with your mental health and give you supports if needed
- Check other issues like bladder and bowel function or your risk of falls

If you have a carer, your GP may check in with them. They may see if your carer needs respite care, home care or more support. You can access supports through local councils (see What supports are available below).

Your GP may also talk to you about advance care planning.

What can I do?

Once you have had a stroke, you have a higher risk of having a second stroke. To reduce your risk:

- Follow your treatment plan
- Take any medication as directed
- Live a healthy lifestyle
- Ask your GP how to check for signs of a mini stroke
- Follow your GP's advice about safe driving
- Exercise daily
- Ask your GP about rehab exercises so you can regain independence

Safe driving

You must not drive for at least three months after a stroke. Before you start driving again, you need clearance from your GP.

Your GP may suggest you start taking blood pressure treatments and stop taking other types of medications.

Your GP may also suggest you see a neurologist if you have a high risk of future stroke.

When should I call an ambulance?



A stroke is a medical emergency. If you or someone else shows the signs of stroke, call Triple 0 straight away.

Look for the F.A.S.T. signs. **Face:** Check their face. Has their mouth drooped? **Arms:** Can they lift both arms? **Speech:** Is their speech slurred? Do they understand you? **Time:** Is critical. **Call Triple 0.**

What questions could I ask my doctor?

- How will having a stroke change what I can do?
- Do I need to change my diet?
- When can I drive again after a stroke?
- What other lifestyle changes should I make?
- What supports are available?
- What can I do to reduce my risk?



What supports are available?

Public hospitals

Your GP can refer you to a public specialist at a local public hospital.

Private specialists

Private specialists, called neurologists, are also an option. Ask your GP to refer you.

Where can I learn more?

If you'd like to read more about stroke, these resources from **The Stroke Foundation** can help:

- **Prevent stroke:** strokefoundation.org.au
- **Life after stroke:** strokefoundation.org.au
- **Information for survivors and carers:** strokefoundation.org.au
- **Information in other languages:** strokefoundation.org.au
- **StrokeLine:** strokefoundation.org.au or call 1800 787 653