

Before and After a Stroke

Signs of impending stroke and the effects of having one

To my knowledge I have never had one, at least I don't believe so; and that might sound strange because the effects of a stroke are definitely noticeable as will be explained shortly; but some prior symptoms may easily be attributed to other causes, especially when they seem to be resolved by taking the appropriate medication or simply disappear of their own accord. A mini-stroke is one such type. Whatever the case, dismissing the warning signs as normal and nothing to worry about is to ignore the possibility of an impending stroke. Should any or all of the recognised symptoms be experienced a medical practitioner should be consulted. The following information is courtesy of the Mayo Clinic...

"A stroke occurs when blood flow to a part of the brain is interrupted depriving the brain of oxygen. Reasons for this are varied, but one of the main causes is the blockage of an artery, often by a blood clot. Other contributing factors are: fatty deposits such as cholesterol hardening and narrowing the arteries restricting normal blood flow; blood pooling in the heart when the heartbeat is irregular; blood clotting as mentioned; and narrowing of the main arteries taking blood to the brain. All of these can trigger an Ischemic Stroke which is typical in 87% of cases.

"A Hemorrhagic Stroke occurs when a blood vessel in the brain ruptures, the consequent bleeding creating excess pressure in the skull. The main culprits here are: High Blood Pressure, a leading cause of strokes which weaken and damage blood vessels in the brain over time; Brain Aneurysms, weaknesses in parts of some blood vessels which balloon and may burst; and Structural Abnormalities causing tangled or weak blood vessels.

"A Transient Ischemic Attack usually called a mini-stroke is a temporary blood-flow blockage, the symptoms of which often disappear within minutes or hours; however, experiencing the warning signs even just temporarily should be of more concern than a little. Once a stroke has actually occurred the most noticeable effects are likely to be: weakness or numbness of the face, arm or leg typically on one side of the body; having trouble speaking or understanding; blurred, dimmed vision or total loss of vision in one or both eyes; hearing may also be affected; dizzy spells or problems with balance and co-ordination; and having difficulty walking or moving in general." These conditions are clear warning signs of a stroke having already occurred and require immediate medical attention.

A number of factors contribute to the risk of having a stroke, and many of these can be as a result of poor lifestyle management over years and decades. Smoking and alcohol

consumption, especially in excess, certainly add to the problem along with physical inactivity and dietary choices. High salt content with food doesn't help; neither do Trans and Saturated fats which are present in even fresh food and are generally regarded as prime cholesterol accumulators. Take-out foods and certain ready-made meals from the supermarket are often loaded with salt and fats that may taste nice but are far from healthy and intake should be limited or preferably avoided altogether. Processed foods usually contain additives that may also contribute to the eventual incidence of stroke.

Some medical conditions would seem to have a direct bearing on the possibility of having a stroke. High cholesterol has already been mentioned; then there is diabetes; and also obstructive sleep apnoea which occurs when the heart beat is erratic or stops altogether for a short period, maybe for three to five seconds. Admittedly, this is not necessarily the precursor of a stroke waiting to happen, but sufferers need to seek professional medical advice. Anyone with a family history of stroke or heart attack should bear in mind that they too are susceptible and need to be careful with their lifestyle choices and general health.

Anyone who believes they might have experienced one or more of the warning signs of a possible stroke should consult a doctor who may advise having tests to confirm whether or not this is the case; and during the initial consultation it would be wise to request a diet plan that will allay or maybe reverse any harm done to date. The fact remains, however, that we all have the ability to do the right thing by ourselves and should take action before it is too late. In this respect, complacency is our worst enemy; that and believing we are bullet-proof.

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