

## Stroke

Although some may find that Atrial Fibrillation (an abnormal heart rhythm resulting in the heart being 'out of tune') gives uncomfortable symptoms or no symptoms, in all it increases the risk of possibly suffering from a stroke.

A person having no other problems but suffering from Atrial Fibrillation, so called 'lone Atrial Fibrillation' over the age of 65 has a five fold increase in their risk of suffering from a stroke. Patients who suffer from Atrial Fibrillation but have no blood thinning medication have a 35% chance of suffering from a stroke.

This risk of stroke is carried even if the Atrial Fibrillation comes and goes (so called Paroxysmal Atrial Fibrillation) or is there permanently. It is present if the Atrial Fibrillation causes other symptoms or not.

Even with appropriate blood thinning medication an individual still runs the risk of suffering from a stroke and it is important to recognise the signs and what you, or someone with you should do.

### What is a Stroke?

Stroke is a 'brain attack' where the oxygen supply to an area of the brain has been disrupted. This can occur due to a clot blocking an artery to the brain or can be caused by a bleed from an artery in to the brain tissue.

The symptoms of a stroke can be recognised by the FAST test, which is the test also used by the paramedics to diagnose a stroke.

### Symptoms or Signs of a Stroke - The FAST Test.

When thinking about a stroke it is useful to think of a simple tool. This is referred to as FAST.

**Facial weakness** - can the person smile?  
 Has their mouth or eye drooped?

**Arm weakness** - can the person raise both arms?

**Speech problems** - can the person speak clearly and understand what you say?

**Time to call 999**

If a person fails any of these tests it is time to call for help. This should be by calling 999. Stroke is a medical emergency and receiving hospital assistance quickly can limit further damage and help someone make a full recovery.

### If the symptoms settle quickly

In a situation where the symptoms of the FAST test seem to disappear quickly and normal body function is returned this may be a 'mini stroke' or more correctly a Transient Ischaemic Attack (a TIA). Although immediate help may not be required you should attend your General Practitioner promptly to be referred to a specialist stroke service. These mini strokes can be signs that there is a risk of a more major stroke.

**STROKE IS A MEDICAL EMERGENCY AND ASSISTANCE SHOULD BE SOUGHT WITHOUT DELAY!**

### Further information

The Stroke Association is a useful source of information and support for those who have suffered a stroke or are caring for someone affected by a stroke. They can be contacted through the internet at:  
<http://www.stroke.org.uk/index.html>

Or through the Stroke Associations help line:

**Stroke Helpline** If you would like information or advice about stroke contact the Stroke Helpline on 0845 3033 100 (calls charged at local rate) open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. Email: [info@stroke.org.uk](mailto:info@stroke.org.uk) or write to: Stroke Information Service, The Stroke Association, 240 City Road, London EC1V 2PR

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