

# What is an Ischemic Stroke?

*"My symptoms came awfully sudden. I had a tingling in my face, and then I had numbness in my lips, and I thought something was strange."*

*"And I started feeling tingling in my arms. And I put down my fork and I was look-- staring at my arms. And as I- and my husband said, "What's wrong?" And I said, "I don't know. I feel funny."*

An ischemic stroke occurs when one of the vessels that supplies blood to your brain becomes blocked, usually by a blood clot.

When this happens, it means that the brain tissues beyond the blocked area can't get the fuel they need to work, so they quickly begin to die.

"Ischemia" means a lack of blood flow, and ischemic strokes are the most common type of stroke.

*"Ischemic stroke is the type that there's a blockage, and you have two types. You can look at it like this. Basically, there could be a local blockage, or the blockage can come from somewhere from distance basically. So, if you have kind of a local blockage that's called thrombotic. If the blockage originates somewhere from distance that's called embolic."*

The most common cause of ischemic stroke is a blood vessel disease called atherosclerosis.

This disease occurs when fat deposits slowly build up on the inside of your artery walls. This can be caused by your family history, or it can be caused by lifestyle choices like making unhealthy food choices and not getting enough exercise.

Over time, blood clots may form inside the artery wall, reducing or even completely stopping the flow of blood through the blood vessel. This can lead to a stroke.

A blood clot can also form in another part of the body like the lungs and travel into the brain, blocking the blood flow. This can also cause a stroke.

A stroke is serious and requires immediate medical help. The faster you can get medical help, the better chance you have of limiting the stroke's damage.

To help people quickly identify a possible stroke, the American Stroke Association uses the F.A.S.T. approach.

This stands for: Face Drooping; Arm Weakness; Speech Difficulty; Time to call 911.

If you experience any of these symptoms, or if you see them in someone else, call 911 right away to get help.

Many studies have shown that fast treatment for ischemic strokes, especially within the first few hours, can make the difference between permanent damage and an easier recovery.

*"One of the things that we talk about a lot in emergency medicine is whether or not you're in the window for tPA. That window is from the time that symptoms started until anywhere from three to four-and-a-half hours afterwards. Once you hit that four-and-a-half-hour mark, you're not considered a candidate for tPA anymore."*

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Remember, time is brain, the longer blood flow to the brain is blocked, the more damage may occur.

You must seek medical attention immediately.

Call 911 and get the help you need to reduce the damage an ischemic stroke can cause.