

# A Patient's Guide to Canadian Best Practice Recommendations for Stroke Care

Canadian Best Practice Recommendations for Stroke Care have been developed by stroke experts across the country. These recommendations focus on optimal treatment for stroke patients. A patient's guide to this information can be found on the following pages. Learn more about the Canadian Stroke Strategy at <u>www.canadianstrokestrategy.ca</u>





Canadian Stroke Network Réseau canadien contre les accidents cérébrovasculaires



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# Stroke Prevention, Treatment and Recovery: Basic Information for Patients and Their Families

Strokes can be prevented and treated. *Canadian Best Practice Recommendations for Stroke Care* describe how to prevent stroke and how to care for patients with stroke. These recommendations are based on current research. When the *Best Practices* are followed, the impact of stroke is reduced.

Be informed | Be involved | Take action

### **KNOW ABOUT STROKE**

- Stroke is a medical emergency.
- The faster a possible stroke patient gets to hospital, the better their chances of receiving treatments that could help reverse the effects of the stroke.
- Be familiar with the warning signs of stroke and take immediate action by calling 9-1-1 or your local emergency number.

#### Know the Signs and Symptoms of Stroke:

Weakness – <u>Sudden</u> loss of strength or sudden numbness in the face, arm or leg, even if temporary.

**Trouble speaking**—<u>Sudden</u> difficulty speaking or understanding or sudden confusion, even if temporary.

Vision problems – <u>Sudden</u> trouble with vision, even if temporary.

Headache – <u>Sudden</u> severe and unusual headache.

**Dizziness**—<u>Sudden</u> loss of balance, especially with any of the above signs.



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#### STROKE CARE IN HOSPITAL

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- You should be seen by a team of health-care professionals who are experts in stroke, preferably in a special unit dedicated to the care of stroke patients.
- The stroke team will plan your treatment and rehabilitation needs, and discuss these with you. *Get involved in the plan.*
- You should be assessed to see if you have trouble swallowing. Swallowing difficulties are common after stroke and can lead to choking and pneumonia. Your diet should be assessed as well.
- If your stroke was caused by a blood clot, you should be given a blood thinner, like ASA (commonly referred to as Aspirin<sup>™</sup>) to help prevent more blood clots. *Ask if a "blood thinner" can help you.*
- You should have a special scan to see if the blood vessels in your neck are blocked and are a cause of your stroke.
- If your neck arteries are blocked, you should be assessed to see if you need surgery.
- You should have your blood pressure checked to make sure it is not too high. High blood pressure is the leading cause of stroke. *Know your blood pressure.*
- You should have your blood sugar checked to find out if you have diabetes. Diabetes is an important risk factor for stroke.









A Patient's Guide to Stroke Care



#### PREVENTION

- Once you have had a stroke or mini-stroke, the chance of having another one is higher. Know the signs and symptoms and *be prepared* to respond.
- You need to work with health-care providers to develop a plan to deal with the things that put you at risk of stroke.
- Know your risk factors for stroke and find out how to reduce them. *Take action.* These include:
  - high blood pressure

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- unhealthy diet
- lack of exercise
- smoking
- high cholesterol (lipids)
- You may be prescribed ASA (commonly referred to as Aspirin<sup>™</sup>) or another blood thinner to take every day.

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• A combination of lifestyle changes and medications may be necessary to control your blood pressure, diabetes, and cholesterol. *Take control.* 

# EDUCATION

If you had a stroke or mini-stroke, or if you are at risk for stroke, you should be given key information from health-care professionals at every stage of your care. *Find out:* 

- What has the stroke done to me?
- What will my recovery be like?
- What are my needs after I leave the hospital?
- What are my emotional needs and those of my family?
- What can I do to prevent another stroke?
- How can I access services and support in my community?

Before you leave hospital, you should receive educational materials, such as the Heart and Stroke Foundation's "Let's Talk About Stroke."

## There is hope after stroke. To learn more, visit:

www.canadianstrokestrategy.ca www.heartandstroke.ca

www.canadianstrokenetwork.ca

www.sodium101.ca

www.strokengine.ca

Ask questions, get answers.