

Stroke and transient ischaemic attack in over 16s: diagnosis and initial management

Information for the public

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Stroke: the care you should expect

A stroke happens when the blood supply to part of the brain is cut off, or when there is bleeding in or around the brain. More than 100,000 strokes happen in the UK every year. Over 1.2 million people in the UK are living with the effects of a stroke, making it the biggest single cause of disability. For the best chance of recovery, a stroke needs to be recognised and treated quickly. If symptoms disappear within a few hours, it is known as a transient ischaemic attack or TIA (also called a 'mini stroke') – this can be a warning sign that a stroke will happen in the future.

We want this guideline to make a difference to people with a stroke or TIA by making sure:

- their symptoms are spotted quickly and a specialist sees them within 24 hours
- they are offered the right scans and tests to get a fast diagnosis
- aspirin is offered straightaway after a TIA to help prevent a stroke
- the right treatment is offered quickly depending on the type of stroke.

Making decisions together

Decisions about treatment and care are best when they are made together. Your care team should give you clear information, talk with you about your options and listen carefully to your views and concerns. They should also:

- explain in an open and sensitive way what a stroke or a TIA is
- make sure you understand what is happening in your treatment and care, and support you to say what you want
- give you more information whenever you need it.

If you can't understand the information you are given, tell your healthcare professional.

Read more about [making decisions about your care](#).

Helping you decide about treatment

Decompressive hemicraniectomy for severe stroke

A decompressive hemicraniectomy is a type of surgery sometimes used when people have swelling in their brain after a severe stroke. The surgery involves removing part of the skull to relieve the pressure caused by the swelling. There are pros and cons to this type of surgery. People are more likely to survive after their stroke but they have a higher chance of severe disability. We've produced this [patient decision aid](#) to help stroke teams discuss decompressive hemicraniectomy with people who have had a stroke and their families and carers, so they can decide together if this is the right choice.

Where can I find out more?

The [NHS website](#) has more information about stroke.

The organisations below can give you more advice and support.

- [Stroke Association](#), 0303 3033 100
- [Northern Ireland Chest, Heart and Stroke Association](#), 028 9032 0184
- [Different Strokes](#), 0845 130 7172

NICE is not responsible for the content of these websites.

To share an experience of care you have received, contact your local [Healthwatch](#).

We wrote this guideline with people who have been affected by stroke and staff who treat and support them. All the decisions are based on the best research available.

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