

Natural Help 4... Stroke



What is a Stroke?

A [stroke](#) or cardiovascular accident is a type of cardiovascular condition that **affects the blood vessels** in charge of supplying blood, vital oxygen, and nutrients to the brain. A [stroke](#) occurs when a blood vessel is either blocked by a clot or ruptures.

The blood flow is interrupted, **depriving that particular area of the brain of oxygen**. Every [stroke](#) is different, with signs and symptoms that vary according to the type of [stroke](#), the part of the brain affected, and the size of the damaged area.

Differentiating Between the Types of Strokes

Ischemic [Stroke](#)

An ischemic [stroke](#) is the **most common type of stroke**. It occurs when an artery or arteriole carrying blood to a part of the brain is obstructed. If this blood supply is blocked for a few minutes or more, lack of oxygen will cause that part of the brain to stop functioning properly and nerve cells can begin to die off. If blood flow is restored promptly, the damage can be limited or even reversed.

Hemorrhagic [Stroke](#)

A hemorrhagic [stroke](#) occurs when a blood vessel in the brain ruptures and bleeding into the surrounding tissue occurs. This **type of stroke is usually severe and is less common**, affecting approximately 10 percent of [stroke](#) sufferers. One of the major risk factors of a hemorrhagic [stroke](#) is high blood pressure (hypertension), which weakens the walls of the blood vessels, causing them to rupture under pressure.

There are **two main subtypes of hemorrhagic strokes** - subarachnoid hemorrhage and intracerebral hemorrhage. A subarachnoid hemorrhage occurs as a **result of bleeding that takes place in the area around the brain**. This is usually due to an aneurysm, a weak spot within a blood vessel's wall. An intracerebral hemorrhage is the more common form of hemorrhagic [stroke](#) and is associated with bleeding within the brain tissue itself.

Transient Ischemic Attack (TIA)

Mini stroke is a term often used to describe a transient ischemic attack (TIA), often a warning of a possible impending [stroke](#). A TIA is **similar to an ischemic stroke** because it results in the sudden loss of function of a particular

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part of the body, which stems from the **sudden lack of blood flow to that particular part of the brain.**

However, the difference between a TIA and an ischemic [stroke](#) is that the **TIA symptoms disappear quickly**, usually within 24 hours. TIA's are strong indicators that a person is at increased risk of a future [stroke](#).

Diagnosing a Stroke

The **diagnosis of a [stroke](#)** is based on the physical symptoms of the patient as well as medical history. A physical and neurological examination will also be performed. Certain tests such as blood tests and imaging scans such as a CT scan will also be done to determine the area of the brain involved and the severity of the [stroke](#).

What are the Symptoms of a Stroke?

The **symptoms of a [stroke](#)** may come on suddenly such as during sleep, or progress gradually and vary depending on which part of the brain is affected and the size of the area affected. Injury to one side of the brain usually affects the opposite side of the body.

Symptoms may also vary from patient to patient and include the following:


- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg – particularly on one side of the body
- Trouble speaking or understanding
- Poor vision such as blurring, double vision, dimness or blindness in one or both eyes
- Difficulty walking or standing, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- A severe headache with no known cause
- Confusion and personality changes, problems with judgment
- Nausea or vomiting
- Drooling as a result of weakened facial muscles and difficulty swallowing

What Causes a Stroke?

As mentioned previously, a [stroke](#) occurs when a blood vessel carrying oxygen and nutrients to the brain becomes blocked by a blood clot or some other mass, or when it ruptures. As a result, part of the brain does not get sufficient oxygen and blood. The **nerve cells in the affected area are unable to function and die almost immediately** because they are deprived of oxygen. When the nerve cells cannot function, the parts of the body they control are also affected and cannot function correctly, either.


The **effects of a [stroke](#)** can be devastating, and the most common problems experienced are:

- Weakness or paralysis in the arms or legs
- Trouble swallowing
- Perceptual problems – changes to the way things are seen
- Sensory problems – changes to way things are felt
- Cognitive problems – problems experienced when thinking or remembering
- Trouble speaking, reading or writing



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Michele Carelse, Clinical Psychologist



All of our natural remedies are formulated by our expert team of herbalists, naturopaths and homeopaths, and headed by Michele Carelse.

Michele has had years of experience in the manufacturing and use of natural remedies. In addition, she is a trained Clinical Psychologist and has been incorporating natural remedies into her treatment of patients with depression, anxiety, ADD, ADHD and stress for many years with spectacular results.

- Depression
- Fatigue
- Incontinence

Help for Stroke Sufferers

Ischemic and hemorrhagic **strokes are treated differently**, and it is essential they be treated by a physician. Treatment of an ischemic [stroke](#) involves removing the blockage and restoring blood flow to the brain. In hemorrhagic strokes, treatment consists of introducing a blockage to prevent further rupture and bleeding.

Medication such as clot-busters (e.g. aspirin) and blood-thinners (e.g. Warfarin) are prescribed. These drugs are very potent, but can have **harmful side effects**.

Procedures such as a carotid endarterectomy (in which a blood vessel blockage is surgically removed from the carotid artery) may also be performed. Sometimes balloon angioplasty and implantable steel screens called “stents” are used to treat cardiovascular disease to relieve blockages and widen the arteries.

Holistic and **natural treatments offer numerous effective methods** to reduce your risk of [stroke](#). Treatments involving herbal and homeopathic remedies are gentle and safe to use, while at the same time addressing the underlying causes of the condition.

These remedies contain carefully selected herbs well known for their **cardiovascular properties**, such as Crataegus oxyacantha (Hawthorn), and Passiflora incarnata, which also relaxes blood vessels and **reduces blood pressure**.

In addition, Viburnum opulus (Guelder Rose bark) is a very effective **cardiac tonic and muscle relaxant**, while Ginkgo biloba improves blood flow throughout the body.

Note: People with cardiovascular conditions should always consult their doctors before stopping or adding to their prescription drugs. Remember that it is important to source your natural medicines from a reputable company in order to ensure maximum safety and efficacy.

How to Prevent a Stroke

Recovery and rehabilitation after a [stroke](#) is a gradual process. The **effects of a stroke will vary from patient to patient**. Physical and occupational therapy may be necessary to help the patient regain his or her ability to perform daily tasks.

The **best medicine for strokes is prevention**:

- Make significant changes to your lifestyle by consulting your doctor during regular check-ups. Your blood pressure and cholesterol levels should be kept under control.
- If you suffer from diabetes or have an irregular heartbeat, you may also be at risk of having another [stroke](#), so it is important to make sure that these conditions are well managed.

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- Eat a diet that is low in red meat, fat and salt, and high in fiber-- with plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Limit your intake of alcohol, although one glass of red wine at night (especially with food) may help to lower cholesterol levels.
- Introduce exercise into your daily routine to regulate your weight and improve circulation - walking, running, cycling or joining a gym.
- Always consult your doctor before beginning a new exercise regimen.
- Avoid smoking, as it increases blood pressure levels and narrows the arteries.
- Learn to manage your stress levels by practicing various relaxation techniques such as meditation, and learn stress management techniques.

The Natural Approach

While Western medicine has become the norm in many cultures, it is **not the only treatment option**. Conventional Western medicine (often called allopathic or orthodox medicine) is the system of medicine taught at most medical schools, and many pharmaceutical and synthetic medicines are manufactured and marketed according to the principles of allopathic medicine.

Because most of us in the Western world have grown up in a society in which allopathic medicine is the prevailing norm, we forget that only a few decades ago, homeopathic, herbal and other natural medicines were commonly available and freely used-- even by conventional doctors. While there are often heated debates about which system of medicine is 'better' than the other, many responsible doctors (whether they are allopathic or not) recognize that **both have a role to play in the treatment program**.

Natural medicine has often been frowned upon by conventional doctors, especially by those who do not have sufficient knowledge of these medicines. However, it is encouraging to note that some medical schools are now beginning to re-introduce it into their course work, thereby **providing doctors with a wider range of treatment options** from which to choose. In many countries, especially in Europe, India and China, **natural and homeopathic medicines are commonly prescribed** by conventional doctors and represent a significant part of the total annual drug sales.

Naturopathy is a branch of medicine (just as allopathy is a branch of medicine) which operates according to the underlying philosophy that the **body has an innate capacity to heal itself**. While natural medicines are often called 'alternative' or 'complimentary' medicines, they are, in fact, a **unique and independent form of medicine** in their own right, well able to **treat a variety of conditions**. Perhaps the term 'holistic' medicine is more apt, given the broad range of treatment options and approaches which are to be found within the practice of natural medicine. This encompasses many different disciplines, including herbalism, homeopathy, iridology, osteopathy, chiropractic, therapeutic massage techniques, aromatherapy, acupuncture and many, many more.

Most naturopaths will use a variety of treatment modalities in order to treat their patients in a **holistic way to support health, relieve symptoms and prevent future disease**. In fact, even the World Health Organization defines health as being "... more than simply the absence of illness. It is the active state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being." This is a wonderfully clear description of holistic or natural medicine, which strives to **support health**



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(thereby relieving or preventing symptoms), rather than simply eliminating disease.

Although allopathic medicine certainly has a role to play and has made a tremendous contribution to medical science during the past century, there is a growing perception that it is not the only answer. In many cases, **holistic medicine can accomplish just as much**, if not more – without the risk of side effects, addiction and sacrifice to health so commonly associated with pharmaceutical drugs. Contrary to common perception, and provided that they are manufactured in the correct way, **natural medicines can work quickly and safely to promote healing**.

In many cases, they can **succeed where pharmaceutical drugs have failed**. Despite frequent reports that they are ‘unproven’ and ‘untested’, the opposite is true. Natural medicines have a **long history of usage** and there is a **wealth of empirical evidence** to support their effectiveness and safety. In addition, active clinical research is carried out by many academic hospitals and universities to **support the extensive traditional and empirical evidence behind natural medicines**.

It is also important to know that, like any medicine, herbal and homeopathic medicines **must be manufactured in the correct way**, following acceptable procedures and manufacturing methods to ensure maximum effectiveness and safety. Due to the recent rise in popularity of natural remedies, many companies have sprung up to take advantage of the market. Unfortunately, **not all of them are equipped to manufacture to the correct standards**, often resulting in a flood of inferior (and sometimes even unsafe) remedies onto the market – and giving natural remedies a bad name.

Even some pharmaceutical companies have rushed to claim their market share by producing so-called ‘standardized’ extracts of herbs and offering these as superior to the tried and tested methods of naturopathic manufacturing. Nothing could be further from the truth. While **‘standardized’ extracts** may offer benefit of easy consistency of dosage (and cheaper more efficient production lines), they have **grave disadvantages**, including an increase in side effects, as the medicines produced in this manner lose the natural protective properties of the herbs. In some cases, these side effects have proved fatal – as was seen in the liver toxicity associated with standardized extracts of kava kava, a herb previously safely used for generations without any known side effects.

Most naturopaths recommend what is called the Full Spectrum Method of extraction – which **retains the benefits of ALL the active ingredients within the herb** as opposed to isolating only one – thereby providing a more complete treatment as well as superior protection against side effects.

Whatever your choice, **always choose wisely**. Research what is best for you. If you have a chronic or life-threatening condition, don’t make changes without first discussing them with your doctor, in order that your condition may be monitored. **Well-informed and supportive practitioners will support patients** who want to take responsibility for their own health.

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