

Stroke

This is an immediate life-threatening condition requiring urgent medical attention. It occurs in two main forms: cerebrovascular accident (CVA) and transient ischemic attack (TIA).

A CVA is caused by a blockage or rupturing of a blood vessel in the brain. Tissues beyond the blockage or rupture receive no blood supply and permanent damage to the brain can occur, resulting in physical and/or sensory impairment such as paralysis and/or loss of speech.

A TIA, also known as a mini-stroke, is a temporary condition caused by a minor blockage of a blood vessel in the brain. Recovery is fairly rapid because a TIA is a short-term event that does not cause permanent damage, but it does present some of the signs and symptoms of a stroke. All symptoms of stroke should be considered indicative of a CVA and managed accordingly.

Signs and symptoms of a stroke include:

- sudden, severe headache
- flushed, warm or sometimes ashen grey face
- pupils of unequal size
- weakness or paralysis, usually on one side of the body
- brief loss of consciousness
- blurred vision
- absent or slurred speech, or inability to structure sentences properly
- loss of bowel and bladder control
- facial droop and salivary drool.

Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) encourages you to be prepared for an emergency. Enrol in a QAS first aid course to learn vital life-saving first aid skills.

Enquire online at www.ambulance.qld.gov.au or call 13 QGOV (13 74 68)

Treatment of stroke includes:

- call Triple Zero (000) for an ambulance
- if the casualty is conscious:
 - rest and reassure the patient
 - position the patient with their head and shoulders raised by at least 30 degrees. This minimises the amount of blood being pumped from the heart to the brain and will help to reduce further damage
 - support the affected side if possible
 - regularly monitor and record vital signs (heart rate and respiration rate)
 - you may be able to determine which side of the body is affected by asking a conscious patient to smile. The affected side of the mouth will not move up into a smile



Stroke patient with head and shoulders elevated 30°

- if the casualty is unconscious but breathing normally:
 - place the patient in the recovery position to help drain any fluids or vomit from the mouth
 - regularly monitor and record vital signs (heart rate and respiration rate).