



The Connection Between Stroke and Physical Therapy

A stroke can affect men and women of all ages and carries with it damaging and potentially life-threatening complications. Simply stated, **a stroke refers to an unexpected loss of brain function that occurs when blood flow to the brain is interrupted or when blood vessels in the brain rupture.** When the blood flow is affected, the brain cells in the affected area die, and this can cause long-term damage.

Depending on the area injured, a stroke can cause an individual to lose his or her ability to see, speak, read or write, along with loss of memory or an impaired thought process. Also, movement is limited to partial or full paralysis. The slightest of delays in blood flow can cause damage to the brain. **The longer the brain is without important nutrients and oxygen carried by the blood, the higher the risk of permanent damage.**

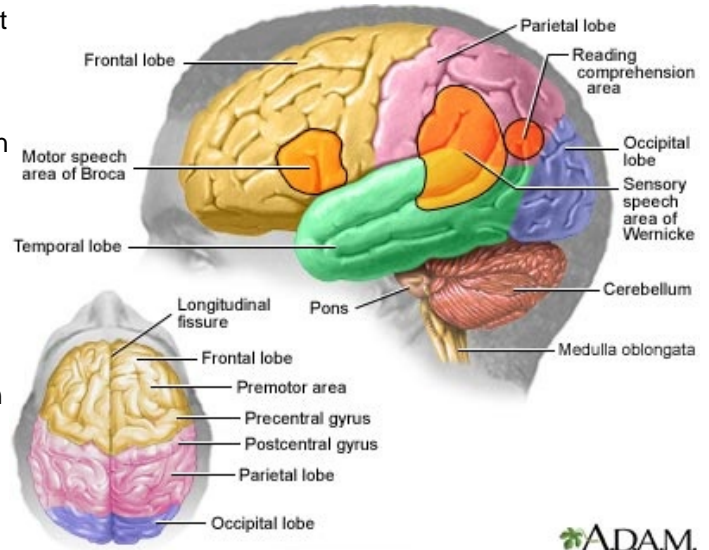
So, what are the risk factors of stroke?

They are high blood pressure, high cholesterol levels, certain heart conditions, diabetes, obesity, smoking, stress, and drinking too much alcohol. In addition women are subject to an extra set of risk factors, such as menopause and hormonal changes, as well as conditions associated with pregnancy and the use of birth control pills. A low activity level has further been linked to stroke risk, bringing yet another benefit to regular exercise.

Fortunately, you can identify a stroke early through **FOUR MAJOR WARNING SIGNS** and potentially decrease the severity of the damage:

- Weakness or numbness in the face, arm or leg
- Speech or comprehension trouble, vision problems
- Headache
- Dizziness

Each of these warning signs can occur alone or in any combination. So, learn and remember the list. Remember, timing is key. Getting treatment quickly can help counteract the damaging effect of a stroke. So if any of these warning signs occur, be sure to get medical attention immediately!



ADAM.

Impact of a Stroke

Knowing the warning signs of a stroke can not only save your own life, but that of someone close to you as well. In fact, most of us know someone who has suffered a stroke and have seen its damaging effects.

Share this information with members of your family, especially those who are aging, and you just may save a life.

Physical Therapy and Stroke Recovery

You may not expect physical therapy to play an important part in stroke recovery, but it is often referred to as an indispensable tool. While there are other types of stroke rehabilitation, including speech and occupational therapy, physical therapy specifically addresses physical damage. Of course, the type of assistance necessary depends on the type of damage that is present.



As physical therapists, we are trained to teach strengthening exercises to retrain the body following a stroke. **Using a series of custom-designed stretches and exercises, we can help a stroke victim broaden his or her range of motion, build muscle, and increase endurance.**

Before establishing a treatment plan, we test the stroke victim's current levels of motion, strength and endurance, and use this valuable information to create a plan that best suits the individual.

Word of Caution:

Never underestimate the range of treatment provided by your physical therapist. Even if the stroke victim is suffering from partial paralysis or weakness as a result of the stroke, physical therapy can prove to be very beneficial. In the case of paralysis, we can teach the stroke victim ways to compensate for the loss, in addition to prescribing treatment for the affected limb(s). For stroke sufferers forced to combat ongoing weakness, physical therapy can help to strengthen the extremities as a long-term solution. Physical therapy plays an integral role in stroke recovery. **If you or someone you know has suffered a stroke, contact your physical therapist now to open a new door to recovery.**

Tip to consider:

Do not use towel bars for support when in the bathroom. Grab bars are an inexpensive modification and can be well worth the cost when compared to potential injuries.