Pediatric Stroke

A child has a stroke when a part of the brain can’t get the oxygen and blood that it needs. Without blood supply, brain tissue cannot survive. For this reason, quick response is needed.

What are some common causes?
A common cause is that a blood clot forms in the heart and travels to the brain. Trauma to the head and neck can also be a cause.

Strokes in children are rare
Strokes occur in 1 out of 4,000 live births or 11 out of 100,000 children under 18 years old.

What does a stroke look like in a child?
If a child has had a stroke, there may be a greater risk for another stroke. A quick response can help prevent problems. If your child has any of the signs listed below, call 911 right away.

- Sudden weakness or numbness on one side of the body or face.
- Sudden falling or loss of balance that is new for your child.
- Sudden change in speech or understanding speech that is new for your child.
- Sudden headache, crying with complaints of head pain.
- Dizziness
- Vomiting

The signs of a stroke in a child can be hard to pick out. Talk to your doctor or nurse about your concerns.

What are the risks of stroke for children?
Many strokes in children are from unknown causes. There are some body changes that put some children at greater risk of stroke. Most children who have a stroke have more than one risk factor. If your child has sickle cell anemia, lung problems, infections, heart disease, problems with blood clotting, or known problems with how their vessels are formed, there is an increased risk of a stroke.

My child had a stroke. What now?
What to expect largely depends on the cause of the stroke, the size of the damage, and the type of stroke. Many children who survive strokes may develop:

- Seizures
- Problems with sensation
- Problems of movement
- Problems swallowing

Your child may develop long-term effects like:

- Trouble with mood changes
- Trouble with language and learning

After a stroke, your child’s needs may change as he grows. Getting help early will be very important in helping your child’s progress. Your child’s doctor can tell you how often your child will need to be seen. You will need a plan to make certain your child takes any pills that have been prescribed. Your child will need help from a speech, physical, or occupational therapist.
It is a comfort to many parents to know that children can often regain much of their normal function.

**A diagnosis of a stroke is scary**

Pediatric strokes can be scary for the whole family. Be sure to ask your doctor about any questions you or your child may have about your therapy and treatments. Your health care team is there to help.

**For further support**


**References**


Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person’s health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 8/2017 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#7136