

## STROKE / TIA

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**Stroke** - If a blood clot blocks a narrowed artery in the brain or a blood vessel ruptures in the brain area and that part of the brain doesn't get the oxygen it needs, the brain tissue dies. This is called a stroke or cerebro-vascular accident (CVA). A severe stroke can cause death and a less severe stroke may cause irreparable brain damage that may impair certain body functions depending on what part of the brain was affected.

**TIA** - similar in signs and symptoms to a stroke, it is caused by a lack of oxygen to part of the brain. TIA lasts from a few minutes to 24 hours and leaves no permanent brain damage. It is a warning sign that a stroke may follow. The TIA, a transient ischemic attack is also known as a mini-stroke and it is imperative that medical attention be sought preferably during the attack and most definitely after the attack.

**Signs and symptoms of a stroke/TIA** - depend on what part of the brain is affected.

*More common*

- Paralysis of face muscles
- Difficulty speaking, swallowing i.e. slurred speech, drooling
- Dizziness or a sudden fall
- Loss of coordination
- Numbness or weakness of the arms or legs, especially on one side
- Decrease in feel of consciousness
- Mental confusion
- Double vision or loss of vision

*Less common*

- Loss of bladder and bowel control
- Unequal size of pupils
- Severe headache

**First Aid for Stroke/TIA**

1. Begin ESM, do a scene survey. Ask the casualty questions to determine the scene history. Do a primary survey.
2. Get medical help
3. Position casualty at rest in the most comfortable position □ usually semi sitting.
4. Give nothing by mouth, just moisten lips with a wet cloth if necessary.
5. Protect casualty from injury if they are lifted, moved during convulsions.
6. Reassure casualty, keep them warm and calm to prevent further shock.
7. If they become unconscious or semiconscious place them in the recovery position.
8. Start AR if breathing stops, start CPR if there is not pulse.

**Important NOTE on CVA & TIA:** To the untrained observer a person experiencing one of these conditions may simply be considered intoxicated and dismissed without medical care only to find later that the individual expired or suffered irreparable brain damage. Many of the signs and symptoms associated with CVA & TIA are those common to intoxication. Please be aware of this.

**Cardiac arrest** - is when the heart stops pumping. This can happen suddenly or may follow a period of stopped or ineffective breathing.