



# A guide to...

## What is a stroke and the role of the speech therapist?

### *Patient information*

#### How to contact us

Speech and Language Therapy  
Watford General Hospital  
West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust  
Vicarage Road, Watford, Hertfordshire WD18 0HB

**Tel:** 01923 217477 **Ext:** 7477 **Email:** [westherts.adultslt@nhs.net](mailto:westherts.adultslt@nhs.net)

If you need this leaflet in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01923 217198** or email [westherts.pals@nhs.net](mailto:westherts.pals@nhs.net)



Author	Sima Ormazdi
Department	Speech and Language Therapy
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## How this leaflet can help you

If you, or the person you are caring for, has had a stroke this leaflet explains what a stroke is and explains the role of the speech and language therapist.

## What is a stroke?

A stroke happens when the blood supply to part of the brain is suddenly cut off, starving the brain of oxygen.

A stroke is also called a cerebrovascular accident (CVA).

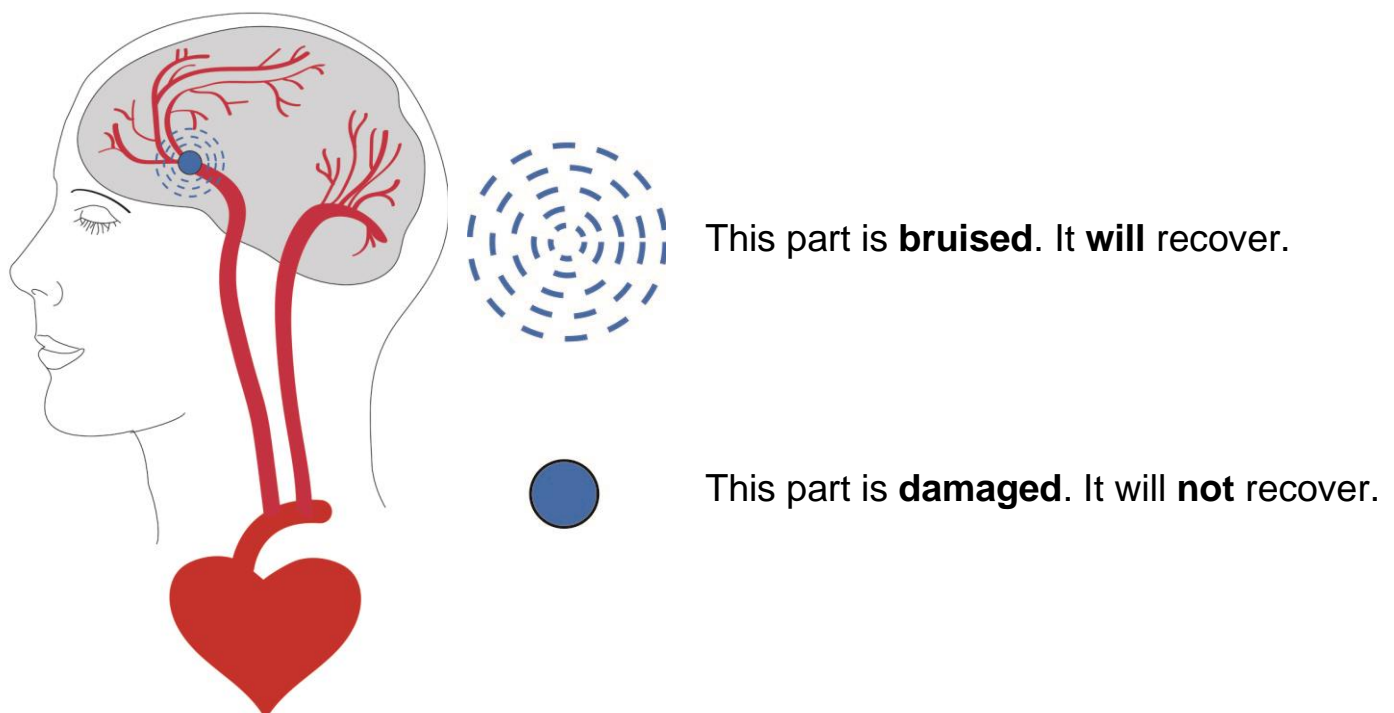
A stroke can happen in two ways:

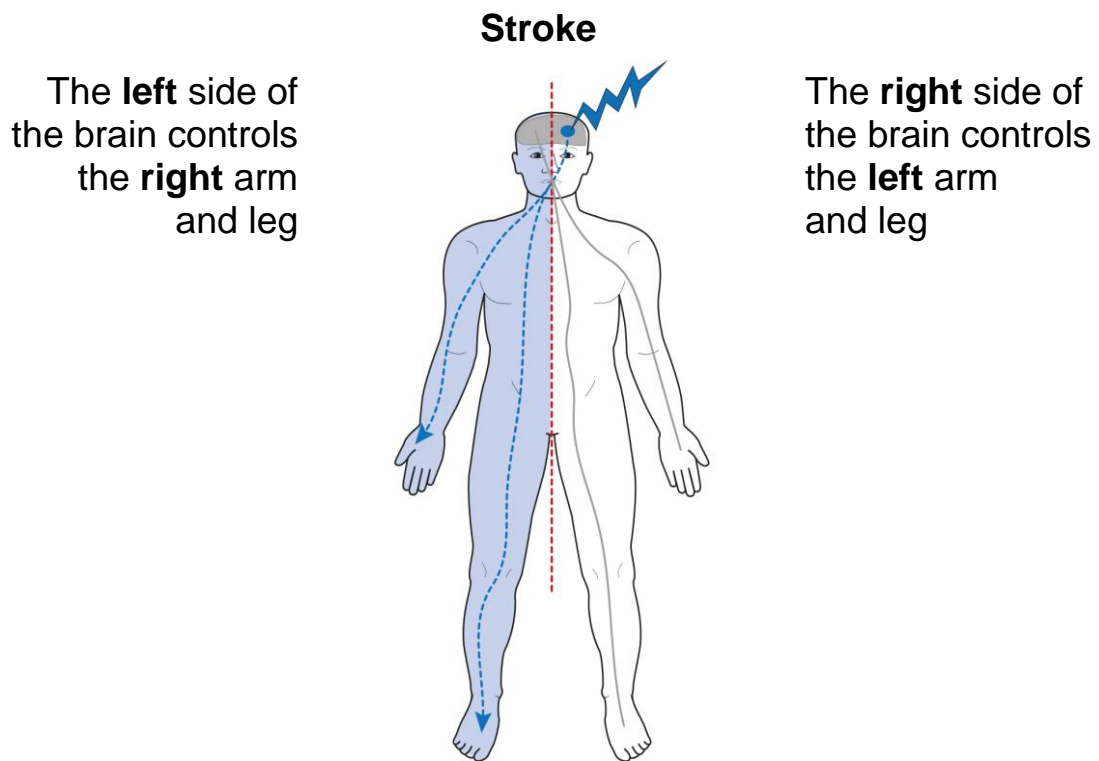
1. An artery carrying the blood to the brain may be blocked by a blood clot. This prevents blood from reaching the brain. This is sometimes called an infarct, thrombus or embolus.
2. An artery might burst and bleed. This is called a haemorrhage.

The part of the brain which is starved of oxygen will be damaged. Different parts of the brain control different parts of the body, and when one side of the brain is damaged, the opposite side of the body is affected.

For most people, the left half of the brain controls speaking, understanding, reading and writing. Therefore, damage to the left half of the brain may affect the person's ability to speak, understand speech, reading and writing.

A **stroke** happens when the **blood supply** to part of the **brain** is **cut off**.





## What is the role of the speech and language therapist?

When you first arrive to the hospital, the stroke team may refer you to the speech and language therapist as you may be experiencing difficulties with your speech/communication and/or swallowing (Dysphagia).

### Speech/communication

Following a stroke, you may have difficulty with speech production and or/ language which impacts on communicating with others. These can include:

- **Dysphasia** – affects language abilities eg understanding, getting your message across/ finding the right words, writing and reading
- **Dysarthria** – affects speech production as a result of muscle weakness. Speech may sound slurred, quiet/ too loud or monotonous
- **Verbal apraxia**- affects speech production as the correct messages are not sent from the brain to the muscles to tell them how and when to make the right sounds. Errors are inconsistent as you may find that you're able to say a word correctly once but make mistakes when repeating it again.

### The speech and language therapist will:

- Have a conversation with you to get to know you
- Find out about your communication/speech difficulties by carrying out assessments
- Help you find the easiest way of communicating in the early stages
- Support you in conversation with other professionals

- If appropriate, devise a therapy programme tailored to your needs to help you communicate again.
- Provide strategies
- Talk to family/carers and friends about your communication difficulties and how they can help.
- Advise and train hospital staff on how to aid communication.

Information leaflets regarding the different speech and language difficulties mentioned above are available. Please ask your speech and language therapist for further details.

## **Swallowing**

Following a stroke, you may experience swallowing difficulties (also known as dysphagia) which can put you at an increased risk of malnutrition, dehydration, aspiration and choking.

The speech and language therapist will assess and advise to ensure that these risks are managed and provide recommendations.

There is a separate information leaflet regarding swallowing difficulties. Please ask your speech and language therapist for further details.

## **List of useful organisations / contact details**

### **Your local Speech and Language Therapy Department**

Watford General Hospital

Contact number: 01923 217477

### **Association of Speech and Language Therapists in Independent Practice (ASLTIP)**

Website: <https://www.asltip.com/>

Contact number: 020 3002 3704

Email: [office@helpwithtalking.com](mailto:office@helpwithtalking.com)

### **The Stroke Association**

Website: <https://www.stroke.org.uk/>

Contact number: 03033 033100

Email: [helpline@stroke.org.uk](mailto:helpline@stroke.org.uk)

### **Different Strokes**

Website: <https://differentstrokes.co.uk/>

Contact number: 03451 307172 **or** 01908 317618

Email: [info@differentstrokes.co.uk](mailto:info@differentstrokes.co.uk)