



Pain After Stroke

After a stroke, some people experience pain as well as numbness and tingling in the face, arms, legs, shoulders, or other parts of the body. Headaches are common after a bleeding (*hemorrhagic*) stroke. Pain may last for a long time (be *chronic*) after a stroke, or it may come and go. Pain can be present right after a stroke, or it may come later.

What causes pain after a stroke?

Damage to the brain and nervous system can cause pain after a stroke. Weakness and inability to move (*paralysis*) on one side of the body can also cause pain. You may also have pain because of joint stiffness, muscle tightness, and limited movement after a stroke.

What is central post-stroke pain?

Central post-stroke pain (*thalamic pain syndrome*) happens if the part of the brain that processes information from the senses (*thalamus*) gets damaged during a stroke. Central post-stroke pain can affect one or many body parts. Symptoms of central post-stroke pain may include:

- Burning, numbness, or tingling pain in the face, arms, or legs.
- Constant pain that does not go away.
- Pain that ranges from moderate to severe.
-

- Pain that gets worse when you are touched or moved or when the temperature changes (*allodynia*).

How is pain after a stroke treated?

Treatment for pain may include:

- Antidepressant medicines.
- Medicines that prevent seizures (*anticonvulsant* medicines).
- Muscle relaxant medicines.
- Injections of medicines to reduce inflammation, such as steroids or botulinum toxin.
- Physical therapy to improve strength and range of motion.
- Transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS). This is the use of electrical currents to help the muscles and nerves.
- Medicines for pain control, such as NSAIDs like aspirin or ibuprofen.

How can I manage pain?

You can manage pain by:

- Lowering and managing your stress level. If you need help with this, ask your health care provider. Consider joining a stroke support group.
- Taking over-the-counter and prescription medicines as told by your health care provider.

Stroke recovery



- Doing physical activities such as exercises that your health care provider approves. Stretching exercises may help to relieve muscle pain.

Summary

- Pain may occur after a stroke.
- Damage to the brain and nervous system can cause pain after a stroke.
- Treatment for pain may include medicines, lowering stress, physical activity, and other options.

This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your health care provider.

Get help right away if you have:

- ▲ A sudden, severe headache with no known cause
- ▲ Nausea or vomiting occurring with another symptom
- ▲ Sudden weakness or numbness of your face, arm or leg, especially on one side of your body
- ▲ Sudden trouble walking or difficulty moving your arms or legs
- ▲ Sudden confusion