

CVA (English)

Cerebro Vascular Accident (CVA)

A CVA, a cerebrovascular accident, is the medical term of a stroke. A literal translation is: an accident in the blood vessels of the brain. A CVA is when blood flow to part of the brain is suddenly stopped by either a blockage or the rupture of a blood vessel. A CVA is a collective name and it includes a cerebral haemorrhage, an ischemic stroke and a TIA (transient ischemic attack).

Ischemic stroke

An ischemic stroke occurs when a blood vessel in the brain is blocked by a blood clot and prevents sugar (glucose) and oxygen from getting to part of the brain. A prolonged blockage can lead to irreversible damage of the brain tissue. 80% of all strokes are ischemic strokes.

TIA

A TIA is a transient ischemic attack. We speak of a TIA if the symptoms of the stroke disappear within 24 hours. In most cases, the symptoms even subside within half an hour. A TIA can be a warning for a real ischemic stroke.

Cerebral haemorrhage

In the case of a cerebral haemorrhage, a blood vessel in the brain ruptures or tears. This leads to the accumulation of blood inside the brain, causing damage to the brain cells.

Symptoms

The symptoms of a CVA depend on the specific part of the brain that has been damaged, as well as the size of the affected area. Generally, the larger the damaged area, the more symptoms a person is likely to have. Here are a few examples of possible symptoms:

- Paralysis or reduced strength in an arm or a leg on one side of the body;
- Paralysis of the facial muscles on one side of the face;
- Unclear speech (dysarthria) or difficulty with use or understanding of language (aphasia);
- Difficulties with swallowing (dysphagia);
- Blindness in one side of the field of vision (hemianopsia);
- Sensory disorders, most commonly on one side of the body;
- Problems with balance or dizziness.

Causes

A blockage in an artery inside the brain is the cause of an ischemic stroke. This blockage can result from multiple factors, including atherosclerosis, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, smoking, diabetes mellitus and more. A cerebral haemorrhage can be caused by high blood pressure, vascular abnormalities or, in some cases, a brain tumor.

Diagnosis

A diagnosis of a CVA is formed using a CT scan or MRI of the head.

Treatment

In certain cases, an ischemic stroke can be treated with a strong blood thinning medication, a procedure known as thrombolysis and conducted at the ICU in Adrz. In other cases, the blood clot in the brain can be mechanically retrieved through a surgical intervention called thrombectomy. This intervention happens at the Erasmus Medical Centre, with whom we collaborate.

Stroke Unit

If you are admitted to Adrz hospital with a CVA, you will be admitted to the stroke unit. You can get here through the emergency room, the ICU or transported here from the academical hospital, EMC. The stroke unit is a specialized ward designated for acute stroke patients with continuous monitoring of vital parameters by a multidisciplinary team.

Neurologist and nurse practitioner

The neurologist will be your primary physician. Working under the neurologist's direction are nurse practitioners. Together, they are responsible for the medical management during your stay in the hospital.

Nurses

The nurses assist you with daily care and medication use. The nurse often initiates rehabilitation and works with you to learn to do as much as possible independently. Additionally, the nurse prepares you for examinations, observes the progression of your illness and guides you through the recovery process. The nurse coordinates your care, provides assistance and guidance and serves as the primary contact for both you and your designated contact person.

Physiotherapist

A physiotherapist helps to restore movement and function in the body. Problems treated by a physiotherapist after a stroke include muscle stiffness and spasticity, problems with movement and balance issues. They can also provide advice on aids that can help with mobility.

Occupational therapist

An occupational therapist assists you with practical problems in daily life, such as self-care and household tasks. Additionally, the occupational therapist can help with difficulties related to the functioning of the arm and hand, offer advice on temporary aids and assess cognitive aspects following a stroke.

Speech therapist

After a stroke you may experience language, speech or swallowing disorders. These can manifest as difficulties in forming words, reading and writing, as well as understanding the language (aphasia).

In some cases, there may be issues with pronouncing words (dysarthria), while the understanding of language generally remains intact. Sometimes a person may undergo issues with swallowing after a stroke (dysphagia). A speech can assist you with any of these issues.

Rehabilitation physician

A rehabilitation physician is a medical doctor specialized in rehabilitation. They can advise the neurologist and the patient in the rehabilitation follow-up process.

Rehabilitation

The purpose of rehabilitation is to help you in performing your daily tasks. In some cases after a stroke, you can go home without any form of rehabilitation, because your symptoms have vanished. In other cases, it is possible to go home with a form of out-patient rehabilitation.

Sometimes the symptoms can be so pronounced, that it is not possible to go home. You may go to a rehabilitation centre, or in other cases, to the rehabilitation ward of a nursing home. The choice depends on various aspect, containing age and condition.