



# When you have a stroke in London



**The London Stroke Strategy**  
*Transforming services in  
the capital*

We understand this may be a difficult time for you, and that you will have many questions to ask.

This leaflet will help describe what happens in the first few days after a stroke has occurred.

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## **Key contacts**

Use this space to write down your own useful contacts.

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# What is a stroke?

A stroke is a brain attack. For your brain to function, it needs a constant blood supply, which provides vital nutrients and oxygen to the brain cells.

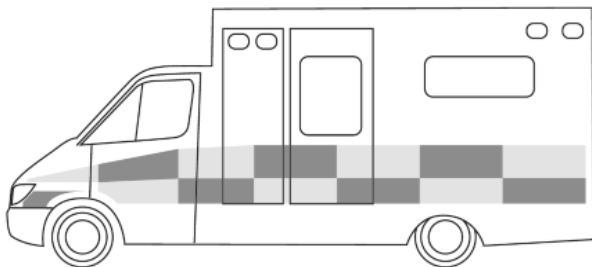


A stroke happens when the blood supply to part of the brain is cut off and brain cells are damaged or die. Strokes affect people in different ways, depending on the part of the brain that is affected, how widespread the damage is and how healthy the person was before the stroke.

World class stroke care is a national priority. Launched in 2010, a new London pathway provides rapid, specialist stroke care, no matter where you live in the capital. This new model is saving lives and reducing long-term disabilities for Londoners.

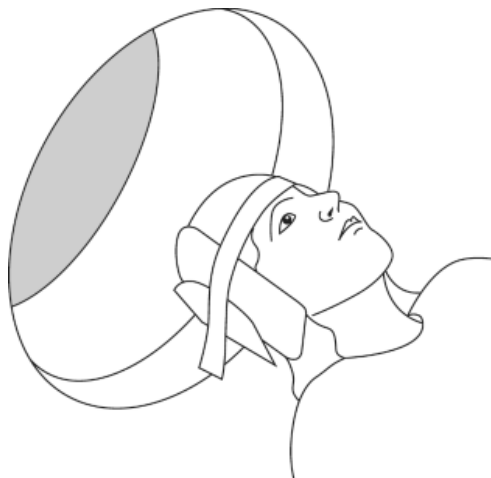
## When a stroke happens

If you call 999, following a stroke or a suspected stroke, you are **immediately transported to a hospital** with specialist stroke care. Whilst you are transported in the ambulance, the stroke care team is alerted to your arrival.



Upon arrival, the stroke care team at the hospital will **quickly assess and treat** you. Specialised tests will be done to find out if a stroke has occurred and what care must be given.

If you have had a stroke, you should have a brain scan (CT or MRI) as soon as possible and always within 24 hours of the stroke.



# When a stroke happens

- A **CT scanner is a special type of X-ray machine** which creates 3D images of the body. It is particularly useful for taking pictures of the brain to understand the cause and location of a stroke.

- **MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) scans** are taken in a large tunnel shaped scanner that produces more detailed pictures of the blood vessels in your brain.



Following your scans the decision will be made by your stroke care team whether it is appropriate for you to **receive clot busting drugs** (thrombolysis).

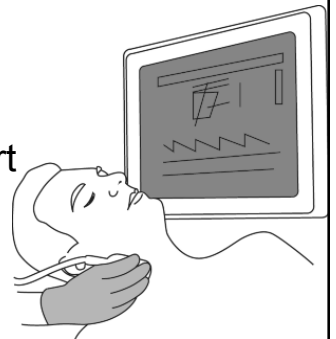
# Your first few days in hospital

For the first few days after your stroke you will continue to be looked after in the specialist **Hyper Acute Stroke Unit**, or **HASU**. Your team at the HASU is made up of a range of specialists trained to give expert stroke care.

## More tests

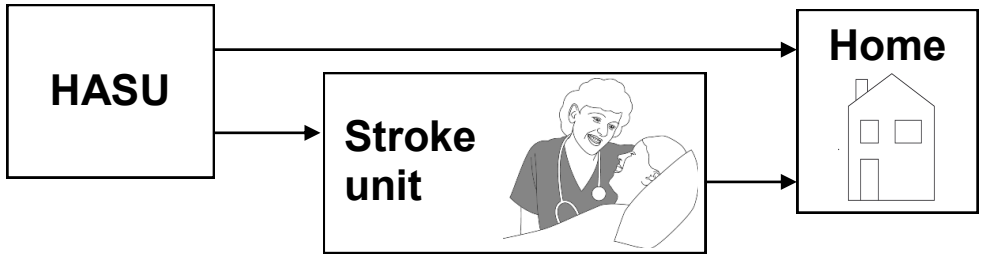
Whilst you are staying at the HASU, the team may carry out tests to help doctors identify why you might have had a stroke and find out what treatments you need to prevent further strokes. These may include:

- Swallow screen - If you cannot swallow properly, there is a risk that food and drink may get into your lungs, which can lead to serious chest infections.
- Blood pressure monitor - High blood pressure is the most common cause of a stroke. If needed, you will be given medication to help stabilise it.
- An ECG - This tests for unusual heart rhythms, which is a risk factor for stroke, but can be treated with medication.



# Stroke unit or home?

When you are well enough, usually around three days after your arrival at hospital, you will **either go to a dedicated local stroke unit or home.**



A **stroke unit is a specialist unit** staffed by stroke experts who care for patients for a longer period of time. If you require ongoing rehabilitation and care, you will be transferred to your local stroke unit. The stroke unit you go to is decided by your postcode, so you can be moved to a hospital closer to your home.

When you go home, you may still need rehabilitation from a community team. Some people will have this instead of some of their hospital stay. This is known as early supported discharge.

When you are discharged from hospital to go home (either from the HASU or the stroke unit), you may receive a discharge plan (or joint care plan). This plan aims to describe the help you will get from health and social care services.

# Useful contacts

**The Stroke Association** can provide detailed stroke information.

**0303 303 3100 | [www.stroke.org.uk](http://www.stroke.org.uk)**

The **London Stroke Directory** is an online website that provides information on the services, activities and opportunities available for people affected by stroke.

**[www.londonstrokedirectory.org.uk](http://www.londonstrokedirectory.org.uk)**

**Age UK** aims to improve later life for everyone, providing information and advice on a range of issues.

**0800 169 6565 | [www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk)**

**Different Strokes** helps stroke survivors of working age to optimise their recovery by offering rehabilitative services, information and advice.

**0845 130 7172**

**Directgov** delivers information and practical advice about public services including information on benefits.

**[www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)**

**Benefits Enquiry Line**

**0800 882 200**

There is space at the front of this booklet for you to write down your own useful contacts.

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**South London Cardiac and Stroke Network**

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020 8812 5950 | [info@slcsn.nhs.uk](mailto:info@slcsn.nhs.uk) | [www.slcsn.nhs.uk](http://www.slcsn.nhs.uk)



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Cardiac and Stroke Network**