

## What is ataxia caused by stroke?

A stroke in the cerebellum can result in difficulties with balance, coordination, and speech. This condition is called ataxia. Ataxia caused by stroke is an acquired form of ataxia, meaning that the ataxia symptoms are the result of an injury or illness.

Approximately 800,000 people in the United States have a stroke each year. About 3% of cases, or 24,000 people, have a stroke in the cerebellum. Damage caused to the cerebellum during the stroke can result in ataxia.

Anyone can have a stroke. Some factors that can put you at higher risk of having a stroke include high blood pressure, obesity, smoking, poor diet, or physical inactivity. Other medical conditions, such as diabetes, heart disease, or blood clotting disorder can also increase the risk of stroke.

## What are the symptoms of ataxia caused by stroke?

Short-term symptoms of cerebellar stroke can look different than other kinds of stroke. When someone has a stroke in their cerebellum, symptoms can include sudden nausea, vomiting, vertigo, loss of balance and coordination, trouble speaking, double vision, blurry or shaky vision, and headaches. If someone suddenly develops these symptoms, call 9-1-1 right away. It is important to get to a hospital as quickly as possible if you suspect someone is having a stroke.

Long-term Ataxia symptoms caused by stroke can vary. It depends on where the stroke happened in the cerebellum, the stroke's size, and the person's age. Three main groups of symptoms can happen – motor, vestibular, and cognitive.

Motor symptoms include problems with balance, coordination, and dexterity. Vestibular symptoms include trouble with eye movement (such as blurry, shaky, jumpy, or double vision), as well as dizziness and vertigo. Cognitive symptoms include changes in intellectual sharpness, emotional regulation, and social awareness.

## What is the prognosis for ataxia caused by stroke?

It can be hard to predict how ataxia caused by stroke will progress over time. This is due to the variability of symptoms. However, with proper support and treatment, improvement is possible.

There are treatment options to prevent a stroke from happening again, including medication and treating stroke risk factors. There are also rehabilitation strategies to help treat ataxia symptoms, including physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech therapy. Medications may also help treat motor, vestibular, and cognitive symptoms.

## **How is the diagnosis made?**

Quick diagnosis is essential for treating cerebellar stroke. If someone is suddenly experiencing cerebellar stroke symptoms – nausea, vomiting, vertigo, loss of balance and coordination, trouble speaking, double vision, blurry or shaky vision, and headaches – it is important to go to the hospital right away.

At the hospital, emergency room doctors will assess someone for visible signs of stroke. Then, they will order a CT scan to confirm a stroke is happening. They may also call a stroke specialist team, if one is available at the hospital. After the CT imaging confirms a stroke is happening, the physicians will suggest different options for immediate treatment. This may include medicine called tissue plasminogen activator (tPA) that can break up the blood clot causing the stroke.

If someone has ataxia after the stroke, they may undergo further testing with a neurologist. This may include a neurological examination and further brain imaging such as an MRI.

## **What kind of support is available after the diagnosis?**

The National Ataxia Foundation (NAF) is committed to providing information and education about Ataxia, support groups for those affected by Ataxia, and promoting and funding research to find the cause for the various forms of Ataxia, better treatments, and, hopefully someday, a cure. NAF has been at the forefront funding promising worldwide research to find answers.

As Ataxia research moves into the clinical phase, pharmaceutical companies will begin recruiting participants for clinical trials. Individuals with Ataxia or who are at-risk for Ataxia are encouraged to enroll in the CoRDS Ataxia Patient Registry. To access the Registry, go to NAF's website [www.ataxia.org](http://www.ataxia.org) and click on the "Enroll in the Patient Registry" tab and follow the directions on the CoRDS website.

NAF provides accurate information for you, your family, and your physician about Ataxia. Please visit the NAF website at [www.ataxia.org](http://www.ataxia.org) for additional information, including a listing of ataxia support groups, physicians who treat Ataxia, social networks, and more. For questions contact the NAF directly at (763) 553-0020 or [naf@ataxia.org](mailto:naf@ataxia.org).