

Part 3: Effects of a Stroke

Stroke recovery varies from person to person and is nearly impossible to predict. But understanding what happens during the recovery process can help you be prepared. The effects of a stroke and how long they may last depend on several factors, including the location and size of the brain injury, the quality and quantity of medical care received, the strength of one's support circle and and his/her will to get better.

There are some effects of a stroke that are common regardless of which side of the brain the injury occurs, such as:

Emotional and Behavioral Conditions

- **Depression**
- **Anxiety**
- **Memory Loss**
- **Pseudobulbar Affect (PBA)** (crying or laughing at unexpected, sometimes inappropriate times)
- **Dementia**

Physical Effects

- **Fatigue**
- **Dysphagia** (swallowing problems)
- **Shoulder Pain** (on the affected/recovering side of the body)
- **Central Pain Syndrome** (unexplainable pain, temperature sensitivity, sensitivity to light and touch)
- **Vision Problems**
- **Balance Issues**
- **Claw Toe and Hammertoe**
- **Foot Drop**
- **Seizures**
- **Spasticity** (tightening of the muscles in the affected limb)



Some common effects of a stroke are most often associated with an injury to either the left or right hemisphere of the brain.

Left Brain Effects

Injury on the left side of the brain may cause:

- Paralysis on the right side of the body
- Aphasia is language impairment that inhibits your ability to use or comprehend words
 - [Learn About the Types of Aphasia](#)
 - [How Technology Helps People with Aphasia](#)
 - [How to Help Others Get Comfortable with Your Loved One's Aphasia](#)
- Apraxia of speech (verbal apraxia) is difficulty initiating and executing voluntary movement patterns necessary to produce speech when there is no paralysis or weakness of speech muscles
 - [Learn More About Apraxia of Speech](#)
 - [Aphasia vs. Apraxia](#)
- Slow, cautious behaviors

Right Brain Effects

Damage on the right side may cause:

- Paralysis on the left side of the body
- [Left-side neglect](#)
- Quick, impulsive behavioral style

Brain Stem Effects

When stroke occurs in the [brain stem](#), depending on the severity of the injury, it can affect both sides of the body and may leave someone in a “locked-in” state. When a locked-in state occurs, the patient is generally unable to speak or achieve any movement below the neck.

Additionally, brain stem stroke may cause ataxia, which is the body's inability to coordinate how muscles move together. Ataxia may affect the movement of arms, legs and chest muscles and may be associated with tremors.

More Resources

- To find an ASHA-certified speech-language pathologist in your area, visit the American Speech-Language Hearing Association at www.asha.org.
- Go to the [Tips for Daily Living Library](#) to get video tips and advice from stroke survivors.

Related Links