

Anterior Inferior Cerebellar Artery Stroke

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Fact Sheet

I have had a stroke, but why do I have such unusual symptoms?

It is true that when one typically thinks of the results of a stroke, one thinks of weakness on one side of the body. However, if the stroke affects the area of the brain called the cerebellum, the effects are quite different. The Anterior Inferior Cerebellar Artery (AICA) is responsible for carrying blood to the cerebellum. This area of the brain is responsible for balance, coordination, sensation of the face and body, movement of the face, sense of body position and midline, hearing and eye movement coordination.

Symptoms of this kind of stroke are: dizziness or vertigo, nausea, imbalance with a feeling of being pulled to one side, facial weakness and numbness on one side and decreased sensation of the body on the other side, hearing loss and/or ringing in the ears, and trouble walking. There may also be trouble seeing clearly. Coordination may be impaired as well.

What can I do to get better?

Therapy will depend upon what symptoms are present and to what degree. Your personal goals are also important and should be taken into account. If you are having trouble hearing, you may see a doctor that specializes in hearing and an audiologist. If swallowing is a problem, you may see a doctor that specializes in the throat. Speech therapy may help to make eating and drinking safe. If your vision is affected, a neuro-ophthalmologist, or an eye doctor that specializes in those with neurologic disorders, may help you to see better with your affected eye.

If your balance is affected, physical therapy will focus on helping you to walk safely. Sometimes a walker or cane will need to be used to help you walk and keep you from falling. Therapy will also focus on improving a sense of where your body is in space and decrease the sense of being pulled over.

If you are dizzy, the physical therapist will also help you to understand these symptoms and work on decreasing them. Gradually increasing your movement tolerance will help you to function better. Being able to focus your eyes in one place while your head is moving will help you to manage the symptoms of dizziness better as well. Your therapist will

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also help you to understand how the vestibular, or inner ear system, works. This knowledge will help you to predict what activities may increase your symptoms or be especially challenging. The dizziness and imbalance that is caused by this type of stroke can be debilitating, but with time and diligent effort in therapy, recovery is possible. The symptoms are much harder to recover from when compared to a simple inner ear disorder, but they can be improved significantly with time and effort. It is very important to stay as active as possible and to follow your physician and therapist's recommendations closely.

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