

# Posterior Inferior Cerebellar Artery Stroke

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## FACT SHEET



Vestibular Rehabilitation  
Special Interest Group



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

It is true that most strokes cause weakness on one side of the body. However, if the stroke affects areas of the brain called the brain stem and cerebellum, the effects are quite different. The Posterior Inferior Cerebellar Artery (PICA) carries blood to the medulla and cerebellum, and a stroke in this area is often called Wallenberg's Syndrome. This area of the brain contributes to balance, coordination, sensation of the face and body, sense of body position and midline, vocal cord function, and eye movement coordination.

Symptoms of this kind of stroke are: dizziness or vertigo, imbalance with a feeling of being pulled to one side, facial numbness on one side and decreased sensation of the body on the other side, hoarseness, and trouble walking. There may also be trouble seeing clearly and swallowing. The eye on one side may

## *What can I do to get better?*

Treatment will depend upon the nature and severity of your symptoms. If swallowing or hoarseness is a problem, you may see a doctor that specializes in the throat and vocal cords. Speech therapy may help to make eating and drinking safe, and to help you talk more clearly. 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 be needed. Therapy will also focus on improving a sense of where your body is in space and decrease the sense of being pulled over to one side.

If you are dizzy, the physical therapist will also help you to understand the symptoms and work on decreasing them. Gradually increasing your movement tolerance will help you to function better. Focusing your eyes in one place while your head is moving will help you to manage the dizziness. Your physical therapist will 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. Finally, your personal goals are also important and should be taken into account.



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