

Your Care Instructions

Multi-infarct dementia is a loss of memory, thinking, judgment, or other mental skills caused by a series of strokes. A stroke occurs when blood flow to a part of the brain is blocked for a short time. If blood flow stops for too long, brain cells die. This leads to a loss of skills that you had before the stroke.

Treatment cannot fix damage caused by a stroke, but you can take medicine and make lifestyle changes that may prevent a future stroke. Changes in your schedule and home also can make life easier.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor or nurse call line if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- Take all your medicines exactly as prescribed. Do not stop or change a medicine without talking to your doctor first. Medicines to lower blood pressure may include beta-blockers, calcium channel blockers, ACE inhibitors, and diuretics. You may take statins to lower cholesterol. Your doctor also may prescribe medicines for depression, pain, sleep problems, anxiety, or agitation.
- Do not drive unless your doctor says it is okay. Your provincial ministry of transportation can do a driving test if there is any question. Plan for other ways of getting around when you are no longer able to drive.
- Eat food that is low in saturated fat and salt. Eat lots of fresh fruits and vegetables and foods high in fibre. A heart-healthy diet can reduce your chance of stroke.
- Stay mentally active. Continue to read and do crossword puzzles or other hobbies.
- Use lists and calendars to remember events.
- Ask for support from family, friends and a counsellor who works with people who have dementia. Counselling may help you accept what has happened and find ways to cope.
- Work with your doctor to control high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes and other conditions that increase your chance of a stroke. A healthy diet, exercise, weight loss (if needed) and medicines can help.
- Do not smoke. If you need help quitting, talk to your doctor about stop-smoking programs and medicines. These can increase your chances of quitting for good.
- Limit alcohol to three drinks a day for men and two drinks a day for women. Too much alcohol can cause health problems.

- If your condition is mild, you can be involved with your doctor and caregivers in planning for the future. This includes organizing your home and daily tasks so that they are easier.

For caregivers

- Make the home safe.
 - Set up a room on one floor so that your loved one does not have to climb stairs.
 - Move throw rugs and furniture that could cause falls.
 - Make sure lighting is good.
 - Put grab bars and seats in tubs and showers.
- Keep to a set schedule. A routine can make a person with dementia feel safe.
- Take care of yourself. Eat well, get enough rest, and take time to do things that you enjoy. Keep up with your own doctor visits, and make sure to take your medicines regularly. Get out of the house as much as you can. Find people to help you care for your loved one. Join a local support group.

When should you call for help?

Call 911 anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- You have symptoms of a stroke. These may include:
 - Sudden numbness, tingling, weakness, or loss of movement in your face, arm, or leg, especially on only one side of your body.
 - Sudden vision changes.
 - Sudden trouble speaking.
 - Sudden confusion or trouble understanding simple statements.
 - Sudden problems with walking or balance.
 - A sudden, severe headache that is different from past headaches.

Call your doctor or nurse call line now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have new symptoms, such as:
 - Wandering or getting lost in places you know well.
 - Losing bladder or bowel control.
 - Having trouble following instructions.
 - Having problems handling money.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor or nurse call line if:

- You need help to arrange care.

For 24/7 nurse advice and general health information call Health Link at 811.

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