

ACUTE STROKE CARE

A stroke occurs when blood stops flowing to any part of the brain, damaging brain cells. Heart and Stroke recommends using the FAST method to determine if you or someone you know is suffering a stroke.

FAST stands for:

Face: is it drooping?

Arms: can you raise both?

Speech: is it slurred or jumbled?

Time: to call 911 right away.

Treatment of stroke is delivered at sites across Manitoba as part of an integrated provincial program.

Clot busting – For ischemic stroke or stroke caused by a blood clot, tissue plasminogen activator is given via intravenous therapy, and works to dissolve the clot and improve blood flow to the part of the brain being deprived of blood flow.

Clot removal – If clot-busting drugs are ruled out, a surgeon may insert a small mechanical device into the blocked artery using a thin tube. The tool traps the clot and either breaks it up or pulls it out of the brain, reopening the blocked blood vessel in the process.

Early, intensive rehabilitative care – Dedicated acute stroke unit, with care available seven days a week, delivered by a trained team of inter-professional staff with specialized skills in the management of stroke patients. It provides early, intensive rehabilitation care effective in preventing stroke complications, reducing stroke recurrence, accelerating mobilization and supporting the rapid transfer of stroke patients from emergency departments.

Telestroke – A 24-7 emergency consultation videoconferencing service, provides emergency physicians with immediate access to neurologists with expertise in stroke care. The service uses CT image sharing technology to allow stroke specialists located in an urban centre to examine patients at rural and northern hospitals in order to diagnose and recommend a plan of care, which may involve treatment locally or may require transportation to Winnipeg.

Telestroke is available in Thompson, The Pas, Dauphin, Brandon, Bethesda Regional Health Centre, Boundary Trails Health Centre and Portage District General Hospital.

Patients are encouraged to call 911 if they experience symptoms of a stroke and paramedics will screen them for criteria to determine whether they are transported to a community hospital for treatment or if they require transport to a larger centre.