My husband's speech patterns have changed? What's going on here? A stroke? [1]

Dear Alice,

Re: My husband's speech

He is 61-years-old and for the last few days, has a hard time saying words. He seems to stutter and just can't get the words out right. I'm worried about maybe a slight stroke. I am going to call the Doc. Monday morning. What else should I do?

Answer

Dear Reader,

Your next step needs to be a visit to the emergency room now, instead of waiting until Monday, to discuss this recent development with a health care provider. Any time someone loses any kind of functioning, especially suddenly, or when a stroke attack is suspected, this needs to be treated as an urgent situation. That way, his or her health care provider is contacted immediately to weigh in on possible causes and treatments.

The medical term for loss of the ability to use or understand language is "aphasia." Aphasia is usually caused by damage to the brain due to head injury, stroke, brain tumor, brain infection, or dementia (such as Alzheimer's disease).

You could be right about the problem possibly being a stroke attack. A stroke occurs when a blood clot blocks a blood vessel in the brain (ischemic stroke) or when a blood vessel bursts, causing bleeding into the brain (hemorrhagic stroke). Strokes damage the brain by preventing normal blood flow and oxygen from getting to the brain tissue; thus it interferes with brain functioning, affecting thinking, talking, walking, etc. Because different areas of the brain are responsible for different functions, the kinds of symptoms caused by a stroke depend on where in the brain the stroke occurs.

A person who experiences a stroke attack is at high risk of having another stroke in the near future. Strokes are particularly common in people who are smokers or heavy alcohol drinkers, or who have certain medical conditions, such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, or diabetes. The tendency to have a stroke also seems to run in families.

If your health care provider suspects that your husband has had a stroke, s/he may order
tests, such as a CT or MRI scan, to confirm the diagnosis.

Treatments include medications to stop a stroke or to prevent the spread of damage from a stroke? these have to be begun within a certain timeframe after the first symptoms of a stroke, in order to provide maximum benefit. Rehabilitation after a stroke includes physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech and language therapy, to help a stroke patient regain as much function as possible.

Do not wait any longer. Go with your husband to the ER so that he is seen by a health care provider sooner than later. The provider will determine the cause of your husband's language difficulty, and then you'll need to decide on a plan for managing and perhaps treating the problem. If your husband happens to experience similar symptoms in the future, do not hesitate going to the ER immediately.

For more information about stroke attacks, visit the Brain Attack Coalition web site [2].

Alice!
Category: General Health [3]
Aches, Pains & Other Ailments [4]

Related questions

What are CT scans and MRIs? [5]
Stroke information, please! [6]
Can't process spoken speech? which makes school difficult! [7]

Published date: Apr 16, 2004
Last reviewed on: Mar 20, 2014

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