

Posterior Inferior Cerebellar Artery Stroke

(A.K.A. Wallenberg's Syndrome or Lateral Medullary Syndrome)

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Patient Fact Sheet

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

Most strokes cause weakness on one side of the body. However, some strokes affect other areas of the brain that control balance. The *brainstem* and *cerebellum* help keep you steady and upright. While they have many important roles, damage to these areas often cause dizziness and imbalance.

The Posterior Inferior Cerebellar Artery (PICA) carries blood to the brainstem and cerebellum. When this blood supply is interrupted, as such as during a stroke, people can develop **Wallenberg's Syndrome**, also known as **Lateral Medullary Syndrome**. This syndrome can cause balance problems and make a person lean or fall to one side. People may also have numbness on one side of the face and body, a drooping eyelid, a hoarse voice, and trouble swallowing. Dizziness is another major symptom of this type of stroke.

People with PICA stroke have a good chance for recovery of movement. Many people return to prior activities and performing daily tasks without assistance after a PICA stroke. While the brain can heal on its own over time, you can improve even more with help from physical therapists and your rehabilitation team.

Treating Your Symptoms

Balance and Walking

Balance affects everything that we do throughout the day. If you are off balance, physical therapy can help you improve your balance so you can walk safely and avoid falls. Sometimes, devices such as canes or walkers can help increase safety.

It is common to feel like you are being pulled to one side after a PICA stroke. Physical therapy can help you become more stable and reduce this feeling.

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PICA Stroke (cont'd)

Dizziness

Movement is a very important part of your recovery. Sometimes people avoid movement because of dizziness, but not moving can slow down your recovery. A physical therapist can help you to gradually increase your movement to help decrease your dizziness, a type of training called habituation.

Swallowing and Hoarseness

If you have trouble swallowing or your voice sounds hoarse, you may see a doctor that treats the throat and vocal cords. A speech therapist can help you eat and drink safely and speak more clearly.

Vision

If your vision is affected, an eye doctor who specializes in brain-related vision problems may help you to see more clearly.

While recovering from a PICA Stroke, your healthcare team will work together to help you regain abilities you need for daily life.

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Healthcare Provider	How They Can Help:
Physical Therapist	• Help with balance and walking • Reduce dizziness • Teach you how to be safer and prevent falls • Use special exercises to help you move with less symptoms
Speech Therapist	• Help with a hoarse or raspy voice • Make it easy to swallow food or drinks safely • Help you speak more clearly
Occupational Therapist	• Help you become more independent in daily activities
Eye Doctor (Specializing in Neurological Conditions)	• Improve how clearly you can see
Medical Doctor	• Help you manage your medications

PICA Stroke (cont'd)

What can I do to get better?

- **Take control of your health:** Get help from the healthcare providers listed in this document based on your needs. Ask them what you can do to help your recovery.
- **Work with your Rehabilitation Team:** Tell the team your goals and which activities are important to you. This will help with setting therapy goals and selecting treatments.
- **Movement is key:** Try not to sit too much because movement is an important part of your recovery. Always follow your healthcare team's advice to stay safe and prevent falls.

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