Intracerebral Hemorrhage (ICH)

Intracerebral hemorrhage means bleeding inside the brain. It occurs when a blood vessel inside the brain ruptures, causing bleeding into surrounding brain tissue. This is the most common type of hemorrhagic stroke.

Causes
The most common cause of an intracerebral hemorrhage is high blood pressure. Other causes may include trauma, infections, tumors, blood clotting problems, and abnormalities in the blood vessels.

Signs of ICH
In most cases, signs happen without warning. Signs vary based on the location and amount of bleeding in the brain, but may include:

- Partial or total loss of consciousness
- Vomiting or severe nausea
- Sudden numbness or weakness of face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Sudden severe headache with no known cause

Call 911 if you see or have any of these signs.
How is ICH treated?

Treatment often includes medicines and surgery, based on the exact cause and size of the stroke.

- If the cause is high blood pressure, doctors first try to reduce the blood pressure with medicines. They then treat the swelling or pressure that builds up inside the head after the blood vessel ruptures.

- Surgery may be needed to limit the damage to brain cells. Surgery is often done when the patient has a good chance of recovering and the injured part of the brain is easy to reach.

- Surgery may also be used if the cause is a blood vessel problem in the brain, such as an arteriovenous malformation (AVM). An AVM is a tangle of thin-walled blood vessels, which can break more easily than healthy vessels.

  AVM is more common in strokes at younger ages, 20 to 40 years old. The onset of signs is slower and not as severe as an aneurysm rupture. For AVM, the doctors often wait for a patient’s condition to improve before doing surgery, or they may try other treatment options such as radiation.

Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: health-info@osu.edu.