Effects

If one of the posterior cerebral arteries (PCAs) becomes blocked or bleeds, a large part of the back of the brain loses its supply of blood and oxygen. This can affect:

- Vision
- Memory
- Judgment
- Alertness and ability to focus on a task
- Body movement
- Body sensation
- Speech

PCAs divide into smaller artery branches. The effects will vary depending on where the blockage occurs.

- For example, if the block is at the start of the artery, the person will have more symptoms than if the block is in only in one branch.

Changes in Eye Movement

A PCA stroke can affect vision and how the eyes work. A stroke in this artery can stop the messages sent from the eye to the brain. It is common to lose part of the field of vision in one or both eyes.

Changes in Memory

Problems with memory are common. The person may easily remember things that happened years ago, but can not remember current tasks. It may be hard for them to form new memories or recognize familiar faces. This can be very frustrating. To reduce confusion and anxiety, the person may make up stories to explain things around them.

- For example, you think you are visiting someone in the hospital when you are the patient getting treatment.
Changes in Judgment
A PCA stroke can also affect judgment. The person may have trouble knowing where items are in the room.
- For example, you may think a chair is next to you when it is across the room.

Changes Alertness and Focus
Changes in alertness may also occur. The person often will sleep more than normal and become very tired with very little activity. When the person is awake, it can be hard to stay focused.
- For example, if you have a dinner tray, you may only focus on one item and not be able to pay attention to the rest.

Changes in Body Movement
Problems with movement are common. The changes in movement or weakness can be on the right or left side of the body. It depends on where the stroke occurred in the artery. When the body is unable to coordinate how the muscles move together, it is called ataxia (a-tax-ee-a).
- For example, you may fall because you are not able to put your foot where you want to walk.

Ataxia can affect arms, legs, and chest muscles. It can lead to uncontrolled body shakes, called tremors. Tremors often occur when the person is beginning or ending body movement. Preventing falls or other accidents are safety concerns.

Changes in Body Sensation
After a stroke, it can be hard for the person to feel touch or know where he or she is being touched. These changes may occur in the face on the same side of the stroke and in the body on the opposite side. It is less common to have more sensitivity in these areas.
- For example, a light touch or change in temperature can hurt. Pain may last after the touch stops.

Changes in Speech
Problems with speech and understanding language, called aphasia, are common with this type of stroke. There are two broad groups of aphasia, with several types within these groups:
- Non-fluent aphasia – The most common problems of non-fluent aphasia range from finding the right word to being able to say that word. A person with non-fluent aphasia may sound hesitant while searching for the right word to say. It can be frustrating for the person affected because he or she usually understands better than he or she is able to express.
- Fluent aphasia – A person with fluent aphasia does not have trouble saying words, but the words spoken may be nonsense or real words that are used incorrectly. The person with fluent aphasia may be unaware that his or her speech is not meaningful. This can lead to frustration and anger toward the listener for not understanding.