

## Statistics



Perinatal stroke affects approximately **one baby** in every

**3,500**  
live births.



Stroke is more common in

**newborns and babies**

than older children.



After a perinatal stroke, the **risk of another stroke** is very low, less than

**1%**

## More help



Find more information.

<https://strokefoundation.org.au/about-stroke/learn/childhood-stroke>



Point your phone or tablet camera on this code. Click on the web address that appears.



StrokeLine can give you information, advice and support. The StrokeLine team are nurses and allied health professionals. StrokeLine is a free, confidential and practical service.

Call **1800 787 653**, Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm, Australian Eastern Standard Time. Email: [strokeline@strokefoundation.org.au](mailto:strokeline@strokefoundation.org.au)

Stroke Foundation thanks Sullivan's family for sharing their story.

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## Do you know the signs of stroke in babies?

Stroke can happen at any age, even in unborn babies.

## What is perinatal stroke?

A stroke happens when blood cannot get to parts of your brain. If this happens your brain can be injured.

Perinatal stroke happens before birth or shortly after birth. Sometime between 28 weeks of pregnancy and one month old. Other terms used are fetal, prenatal, neonatal and in utero stroke.

Signs of stroke in newborns are different from those in older children. Seizures are the most common, but signs may be subtle.

Some babies have no clear signs for weeks or months after their stroke. Parents and doctors might notice the first signs when the baby starts to show weakness on one side of their body.



## Sullivan's story

When Sullivan was three months old his mum became concerned. He was using his left hand more, and his right hand would stay in a fist. She took him to five different doctors. They told her Sullivan was an engaging, healthy, thriving baby. There was nothing to worry about.

At six months old, Sullivan's parents noticed him have a series of spasms. They took him to the Emergency Department but were sent home. Still concerned, they drove 2.5 hours to the closest Children's hospital.

Sullivan underwent many tests. The neurologist said he had survived a stroke, likely between 30 weeks gestation and six weeks of age. He was diagnosed with Infantile Spasms. A rare type of seizure that if left untreated can impact development. It can be caused by the scarring from a perinatal stroke.

Sullivan has lasting impacts from his stroke, but early intervention has made a significant difference. Since his diagnosis, Sullivan's therapists have helped him learn and meet major milestones. It has been crucial for his development.



## Learn the signs of stroke in newborns and babies.

### Stroke in newborns:

- › Seizures.
- › Extreme sleepiness.

**If you see any of these signs, call 000 (triple zero) immediately.**

### Stroke signs in developing babies:

- › Weakness on one side of the body.
- › Holding one hand in a fist.
- › Hand preference before 1 year of age.
- › Delays in early milestones (rolling, sitting, crawling and walking).

**If you see any of these signs, talk to your baby's doctor or maternal and child health nurse.**

## What is early intervention?

A perinatal stroke can affect the normal growth and function of the brain. Early intervention involves activities that help support the development of skills.

In early childhood, the brain has a greater ability to change and reorganise itself. Early intervention takes advantage of this. It helps a child learn and develop despite the challenges caused by the stroke.