

Odds of stroke rise sharply for young people

By Anita Creamer, Sacramento Bee

At the barbershop on Florin Road where he works, Chris Matsumoto was trimming a customer's hair one day in 2006. He'd taken time off work a couple of weeks earlier after having dizzy spells. Suddenly, the severe dizziness returned.

"I got dizzy again, so dizzy," he said. "And then I passed out with a client in my chair."

As it turned out, he'd suffered an ischemic stroke: A clot had blocked blood flow to his brain, cutting off the flow of oxygen and damaging the tissue. He was left unable to speak. The months after that passed in a blur for him, from his diagnosis and hospitalization through his early therapy to relearn how to talk and read.

He was 26 years old.

"This has been an eye-opening experience for me," said barber Chris Matsumoto of the stroke he suffered in his 20s. "Everything is still coming back slowly. It took a lot of work."

From 1994 through 2007, CDC research shows, the rate of ischemic stroke jumped by 47 percent for men ages 35 to 44 and 36 percent for women in the same age group. For men in their early 20s, the number of stroke-related hospitalizations rose by more than 50 percent during that period.

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