



let's talk about

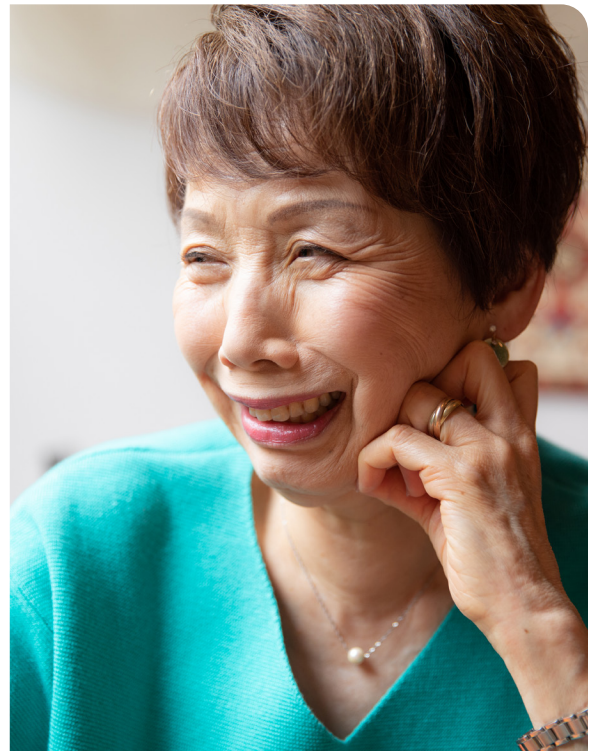
## Stroke and Pseudobulbar Affect

Pseudobulbar affect (PBA) is a medical condition that causes sudden and unpredictable episodes of crying or laughing, often in socially inappropriate situations. PBA is sometimes called emotional lability, pathological crying and laughing or emotional incontinence.

PBA is triggered by damage to an area of the brain, sometimes from stroke. It is thought to impact more than 1 million people in the United States who may also suffer from traumatic brain injury or neurologic diseases such as, multiple sclerosis (MS), amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS – Lou Gehrig's disease), Parkinson's disease and dementias including Alzheimer's disease.

If you have PBA, the inappropriateness, intensity and suddenness of the outbursts can make you feel as if you have lost control over your life. The disconnect between your internal emotions and external expressions can be frustrating – both for you and your loved ones.

Understanding the condition can be a step towards reclaiming your confidence and improving your relationships and quality of life.



### How is PBA diagnosed?

Stroke is a neurologic condition, which can result in life-changing conditions, including emotional impact. Clinicians can easily misdiagnose the uncontrolled crying present with PBA as depression. The relationship between PBA and depression is complex but they are independent of each other and have to be treated as separate conditions. Only a health care professional can properly diagnose PBA through assessments and evaluation. You and your family members can also look for signs.

**If you have had a stroke, then ask yourself the following:**

- Do you cry easily?
- Do you find that even when you try to control your crying, you can't?

- Do you laugh at inappropriate times?
- Do you have emotional outbursts that are inappropriate to the situation?

### How is PBA treated?

The goal of treatment for PBA is to reduce the severity and frequency of episodes. Treatment options include:

- Central nervous system agents (dextromethorphan hydrobromide and quinidine sulfate), which are used to treat involuntary crying or laughing episodes.
- Anti-depressants, which in some cases can help reduce the number and severity of episodes.
- Always work with your health care provider for best treatment options for you.

*(continued)*



### Coping with PBA

PBA can impact the quality of life for the patient and create a burden for the patient's family and caregivers. To cope with a PBA episode, try the following:

- **BE OPEN** about the problem so people are not surprised or confused when you have an episode.
- When you feel an episode coming on, try to **DISTRACT YOURSELF** by counting the number of objects on a shelf or by thinking about something unrelated.
- **TAKE SLOW DEEP BREATHS** until you're in control.
- **RELAX** your forehead, shoulders and other muscle groups that tense up during an emotional episode.



### Resources

Visit or call the following for more information about PBA:

**PBAinfo**  
[www.PBAinfo.org](http://www.PBAinfo.org)

**Brain Injury Association of America:**  
800-444-6443; [www.biausa.org](http://www.biausa.org)

**National Institute of Neurological  
Disorders and Stroke**  
800-352-9424; [www.ninds.nih.gov](http://www.ninds.nih.gov)

**National Institutes of Health**  
301-496-4000; [www.nih.gov](http://www.nih.gov)

**Research**  
[www.clinicaltrials.gov](http://www.clinicaltrials.gov)

### HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1 Call 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653) or visit [stroke.org](http://stroke.org) to learn more about stroke or find local support groups.
- 2 Sign up for our monthly **Stroke Connection** e-news for stroke survivors and caregivers at [StrokeConnection.org](http://StrokeConnection.org).
- 3 Connect with others who have also had an experience with stroke by joining our Support Network at [stroke.org/SupportNetwork](http://stroke.org/SupportNetwork).

### Do you have questions for the doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write down your questions for the next time you see your health care professional.

For example:

**How common is PBA in people with stroke?**

**What tests are recommended to properly differentiate PBA and depression, for proper diagnosis?**

### MY QUESTIONS:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to manage your condition or care for a loved one. Visit [stroke.org/LetsTalkAboutStroke](http://stroke.org/LetsTalkAboutStroke) to learn more.