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by Bonnie Fuller

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EXPERT SAYS

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Why Luke Perry Has Been Sedated & How He'll Be Treated After Massive Stroke – 3 Doctors Explain



[Allison Swan](#)

Luke Perry, 52, has suffered a stroke and is now hospitalized. Although it's unusual to have one at his age, three experts explain why it can happen and what signs to look out for.

Riverdale star [Luke Perry](#) is currently in hospital in L.A. after [suffering a massive stroke](#) at his Sherman Oaks home on the morning of Feb. 27. Luke's prognosis is still unknown, but according to his rep he's being sedated as part of his treatment for the stroke. **HollywoodLife** spoke to **Dr. Dexter Sun**, a neurologist, and two California-based cardiologists – **Dr. Steven Tabak** from [Cedars Sinai](#) in Los Angeles, [Dr. Reed Wilson](#) from Beverly Hills – to find out more about the treatment for strokes, what causes them and how to know if it's happening to you.

What is a stroke?

“Certain areas of the brain experiences a sudden onset of lack blood supply,” Dr. Sun told us. “There are two types of stroke: Hemorrhagic stroke (bleeding) or Ischemic stroke (due to embolus or thrombosis in the blood vessels).”

How do you treat a stroke?

Dr. Sun revealed, “Depends on hemorrhagic stroke or ischemic stroke: Hemorrhagic stroke, frequently due to hypertension. Control blood pressure with supportive treatment. For some cases, the patient may need craniotomy to reduce the intracranial pressure. For ischemic stroke, if in certain hours of the stroke, there is treatment with TPA (dissolve the blood clot), or anticoagulation versus antiplatelets treatment depends on different types of the ischemic stroke.”

What are the warning signs of strokes?

“Sudden onset of facial weakness, difficulty of speech, arm or leg weakness, numbness in arm or leg,” Dr. Sun told us.

Dr. Reed Wilson also broke down the most common warning signs, adding, “The most common symptoms of a stroke are loss of speech, facial droop and weakness on one side of the body. If you have this, get to a hospital.” Neither Dr. Wilson nor Dr. Tabak have treated Luke Perry.

Why would someone who had a stroke be placed in a medically induced coma or sedated? What is a medically induced coma/what does it do for a patient?

“Patients have brain injury, including stroke,” Dr. Sun answered. “Using medication to induce a reversible coma, which will protect the brain tissue in the stroke area (the areas without adequate blood flow). In this way, these areas of brain tissue could reduce the amount of energy (reduce the metabolic demand of brain cells) and intracranial pressure. It could protect the neurons. Medically induced coma is introduced by medications, which will be reversible.”

Luke Perry is 52 years old. Is this a normal age for stroke patients?

“It's not the most common age for stroke,” Dr. Sun told us. “However, it not uncommon. If he has a poorly controlled hypertension, hypercholesterolemia, diabetes, he may have the high risk of stroke. Smoking is another common contributory factor.”

Why would you sedate someone who has had a stroke?

“It’s been shown in studies that in situations where there’s been injury to the brain, inducing a coma can improve the chances of survival and decrease the residual neurologic problems,” Dr. Tabak says, referring to initial reports that [the Riverdale star](#) had been put into a coma. “A coma would be medically induced either with barbiturates or using hypothermia, by dropping the body temperature, and that typically would be done with a large stroke. Sedation is a lighter procedure, usually done to prevent the patient from having seizures or from moving. The current treatment is often administering a medicine called TPA [tissue plasminogen activator], one of the so called clot-busting drugs, that can help to dissolve the clot and restore blood flow to the brain in an effort to minimize the long term damage that’s done to the brain.”

How old are most stroke patients?

“Most patients with strokes are over 65,” Dr. Tabak says. “And those patients that are older and have a stroke typically have it related to the multiple risk factors we know about for cardiovascular disease. Risk factors such as cigarette smoking, hypertension, high cholesterol, diabetes and obesity being the major risk factors for stroke.”

What are the risk factors for younger patients?

“Younger patients can still have strokes related to those risk factors, uncontrolled high blood pressure and smoking in particular,” says Dr. Tabak. “We start to look for other things as well. For example, could there have been an irregularity in the heart rhythm, which can cause clots to form in the heart? Those can place you at risk for a stroke too, so that’s one thing we would look for. Unrecognized heart problems, aneurysms, weakening of the blood vessels in the head. All of these things are potential things to look for in a younger patient. And lastly, the other thing we often look at in younger patients that have strokes are drug related problems such as cocaine or amphetamines, which can place one at risk for a stroke.”

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