

# Stroke

## Acting F.A.S.T. Can Save Lives

### EVERYONE KNOWS THAT WHEN YOU HAVE THE SYMPTOMS OF A HEART ATTACK, YOU SHOULD SEEK EMERGENCY TREATMENT RIGHT AWAY.

That's because time is muscle. A heart attack cuts off blood flow to the cells in the heart muscle, causing them to die.

A stroke could just as well be called a brain attack. Just like in a heart attack, a stroke is caused when blood flow is cut off, causing cells to die. In this case, it is nerve cells in the brain that may control speech or motor functions to the arms or legs. Strokes can be caused when blood vessels are blocked or when a blood vessel ruptures.

Older adults are at greater risk of suffering a stroke. Men are also more likely to have a stroke, though women are more likely to die from stroke. If members of your family have had a stroke, you are at greater risk of stroke yourself. African Americans and Hispanic Americans are also at greater risk of stroke because they more often have high blood pressure.

Age, sex, race and heredity are risk factors you cannot change, but there is much you can do to prevent stroke. Living a healthy lifestyle and controlling risk factors cuts your risk dramatically. You may need your doctor's help to control some risk factors.

High blood pressure is the number one risk factor for stroke. Therefore, it is imperative to follow your doctor's prescription for bringing your blood pressure back to normal. Lowering blood pressure reduces the risk of stroke.

Other risk factors include smoking, diabetes, carotid or other artery disease, atrial fibrillation or other heart disease and sickle cell disease.

Conditions which damage blood vessels, including diabetes and high cholesterol, increase the risk of both types of stroke. Preventive measures are similar to those recommended for hypertension – a low-fat diet, regular exercise, weight control and smoking cessation. Diabetics should be careful to keep their blood sugar under control.

Some strokes occur silently, but when symptoms are present, they include:

- Sudden weakness or numbness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden, severe headache with no known cause

Unfortunately, the majority of Americans don't recognize these symptoms. Treatment options are improving, but time is still crucial. The sooner a patient gets to the emergency room, the better chance he or she has of surviving with minimal disability.

If you suspect that you or someone else is having a stroke, follow the steps below to act FAST! A stroke victim won't be able to complete these tasks without exhibiting impaired speech or weakness of the arm or face. If anyone experiences any of these symptoms, time is important. Call 9-1-1 immediately.

Today there are treatments that may reduce the risk of damage from the most common type of stroke, but only if you get help quickly. Learn the warning signs of stroke, and act quickly. Time lost is brain lost!

### Act F.A.S.T.

- F**ACE Ask the person to smile. Does one side of the face droop?
- A**RM Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?
- S**PEECH Ask the person to repeat a simple sentence. Are the words slurred?
- T**IME If the person shows any of these symptoms, time is important.

### CALL 9-1-1



**Call 9-1-1 immediately** if you or someone you are with has any of the above symptoms.

**DO NOT** wait to see if symptoms improve. Time lost is brain lost!



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