

"Once we know or own weaknesses they cease to do us any harm."
~Georg Lichtenberg

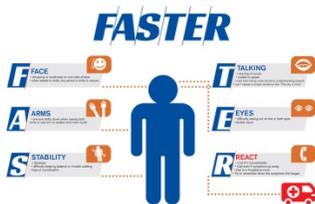
We all have our weaknesses. I certainly know mine. Once we know and understand what they are, we can usually take control of them. Once we do that, they stop controlling us. Think about your weaknesses. Do they control you or do you control them? Sometimes we don't know what are weaknesses are and that's when we can get sidetracked and derailed. Recognize them and take charge of them. If you need help, please contact me. This month, I wanted to write about something very near and dear to my heart, for many reasons. I hope it will help you or someone you love.

Yours in health,



Susan Monaco, Certified Health Coach
Health and Wellness by Design
www.healthnwellnessbydesign.com
susan@healthnwellnessbydesign.com

Warning Signs of a Stroke



Last month, one of my favorite cousins suffered a stroke, shortly after her mom died. I don't know whether the two are related, but it reminded me that many people, particularly women, often don't know they're suffering from a stroke. In addition, people around them don't always recognize the symptoms. If we act fast enough, a stroke's progress can often actually be stopped and any possible disability or potential damage can be reduced if it's caught in time. The clot-dissolving drug, tissue plasminogen activator (tPA), is an emergency treatment that must be given within 2-3 hours of symptoms to offer the best help.

Most people don't realize that strokes are the 3rd leading cause of death in our country. Every year, about 800,000 Americans experience one. A stroke is basically a blockage of the blood flow that carries oxygen to the brain. It's definitely a medical emergency because brain cells starved of oxygen die within a few minutes. I don't usually talk about my mom, but it's what ultimately killed her. Her mom also had a stroke, but survived for many years after.

Given what recently happened to my cousin, I decided it was a good time to educate everyone on the warning signs of a stroke. Thankfully, my cousin, who's more like a sister to me, is going to be fine. But others aren't so fortunate. I'm going to provide you with some very important information you need to know. But most importantly, if you think you're having a stroke or are with someone you think is having one, it's critical to get to a hospital ASAP.

Types of Strokes

There are three different types of strokes I'm going to tell you about.

Ischemic: These are caused by a blood clot and are the majority (87%) of all strokes. They can occur in two ways:

- A blood clot blocks a blood vessel in the brain or neck that is narrowed from an accumulation of plaque.
- A blood clot forms somewhere else in the body and then travels to the brain, where it plugs up a tiny blood vessel.

Hemorrhagic: These are caused by bleeding in the brain that causes enough pressure to cut off the blood supply. This kind of stroke happens in one of two ways:

- There's a weak, bulging spot in the brain's artery wall (an aneurism) and it ruptures.
- There's a web of malformed blood vessels, called an arteriovenous malformation that develops.

Transient ischemic attacks (TIA:** These are known as mini-strokes and are temporary blockages caused by a blood clot. They're considered one of the warning signs of a stroke because 40% of people who have them will ultimately have a major stroke within a year if it isn't treated.

Warning Signs of a Stroke

Strokes typically occur suddenly and without warning and have some of the following symptoms:

- A headache that might cause loss of consciousness
- Confusion
- Loss of speech or difficulty understanding words
- Vision problems in one or both eyes
- Numbness or the inability to move one side of the body
- Dizziness
- Difficulty walking or unexplained falling

The complications of a stroke can be quite severe: paralysis, loss of bladder control, seizures, memory loss and trouble swallowing.

Emergency Treatment for a Stroke

Fortunately, there are ways to help stop a stroke as it's happening. If ANY of the symptoms I've listed above are happening, call 9-1-1 immediately. For an ischemic stroke, the clot-busting medication I mentioned about can be administered within the first three hours and can help dramatically. After this, emergency surgery may be necessary to remove the blood clot, but it must be done within the first six hours.

Stroke Prevention Steps

According to the National Stroke Association, up to 80% of strokes are preventable. So as we get older, it's important to get regular medical checkups.

Obesity can make a stroke more likely, so make controlling your weight a priority. I'm a huge proponent of at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise at least five days per week and this is yet another reason to try to attain this goal. Don't smoke and stay away from people who do, because smoking, as well as second-hand smoke, can accelerate the formation of blood clots in the body.

Eat a healthy diet that includes nuts, seeds, olive oil and fish. Known as the Mediterranean diet, it's often linked to a lower stroke risk. Also, be sure to manage your stress and get enough sleep.

Here's a quick way to "test" someone you think may be having a stroke. Just remember the acronym **FASTER**.

- **Face:** Ask the person to smile. Does one side of their face droop?
- **Arms:** Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one of them drift down?
- **Stability:** Does the person have a hard time keeping their balance? Do they have trouble walking? Do they have problems with coordination?
- **Talking:** Is the person's words slurred? Are they unable to speak? Are you having a hard time understanding what they're saying or are they having a hard time understanding you?
- **Eyes:** Is the person having a hard time seeing out of one or both eyes? Are they having double vision?
- **React:** Time is of the essence. If the person has any ONE of the symptoms listed above, call 911 ASAP, even if the symptoms seem to go away. Be sure to remember when the symptoms first began.

I hope this has been helpful. Have a wonderful month and have a Happy Thanksgiving.