



Stroke Awareness

May 2025



Stroke Facts

- About 800,000 Americans will have a stroke this year. About 100,000 will die from it. Two-thirds of all strokes happen to people over age 65. Stroke risk doubles every ten years past 55. Many of the causes of stroke can be controlled, and rapid treatment when stroke occurs can save lives and prevent permanent damage. May is American Stroke Month.



What is a Stroke?

- A stroke is a “brain attack,” meaning it occurs in the same way a heart attack does, only it affects the brain instead of the heart. A stroke occurs when the blood supply to part of the brain is suddenly cut off. This can happen when a blood clot blocks a blood vessel or when a blood vessel breaks and spills blood into the brain. As a result, brain cells in the affected area die. The cells usually die within minutes to a few hours after the attack starts. When brain cells die, they release chemicals that start a chain reaction, killing even more brain cells in a bigger area.



What is a Stroke Cont.

- When brain cells die, the abilities that are controlled by that area of the brain are lost. This can include speech, movement and memory, depending on where in the brain the stroke occurs and how many brain cells are killed. A small stroke might cause weakness of an arm or a leg. A large stroke might cause paralysis on one side of the body or loss of the ability to speak and understand language. People can sometimes recover completely from minor strokes, but a severe stroke can be fatal. Rapid treatment is the key to preventing death and paralysis. Stroke is an emergency.



Stroke Symptoms

- The five most common stroke symptoms include sudden:
 - Numbness of face, arm or leg, especially one side of the body
 - Confusion, trouble speaking or trouble understanding
 - Trouble seeing in one or both eyes
 - Dizziness, trouble walking, loss of balance or coordination
 - Severe headache with no known cause
- Call 911 if you see any of these symptoms in anyone
- Treatment is much more effective if given soon after the attack. Every minute can make a difference in preventing serious damage or death. Get emergency help even if symptoms are painless and go away quickly.



Stroke Symptoms Cont.

- Some other less common stroke symptoms include:
 - Sudden nausea, fever and vomiting. This is difficult from a viral illness because it comes very quickly, in minutes or hours instead of over several days.
 - Brief loss of consciousness or a period of decreased consciousness, such as fainting, confusion, convulsions or coma.
- These symptoms should be reported to medical personnel immediately.



What is Transient Ischemic Attack (TIA)?

- A transient ischemic attack (TIA) is a stroke that lasts only a few minutes and goes away quickly. A TIA occurs when the blood supply to part of the brain is briefly interrupted. The symptoms are similar to those of stroke, but they usually disappear within an hour.
- Only a doctor can tell whether stroke symptoms are from a TIA or a serious stroke. You should assume that all stroke-like symptoms require emergency help. Don't wait to determine whether they go away. TIAs are often warning signs that a person is at risk for a more serious stroke.



Who is at risk for stroke?

- People over 65, African Americans, people with diabetes, men and people with a family history of stroke are at a greater risk of brain attack than the rest of the population. These things cannot be controlled. People with diabetes can lower their risk of stroke with treatment.
- Many things that increase the risk of stroke can be controlled or treated, such as:
 - High blood pressure- untreated high pressure increases stroke risk four to six times. Blood pressure is too high if it is usually more than 140/90
 - Heart disease- some heart conditions increase stroke risk by up to six times



Who is at risk for stroke cont.

- Continued from previous slide
 - High cholesterol- this increases the risk of stroke by clogging blood vessels.
 - Personal history of stroke or TIA- people who have had a stroke or TIA are at risk for having another stroke. Thirty-five percent of those who experience TIAs have a stroke within five years.
 - Sleep Apnea- people who do not breathe for periods of time while they are sleeping develop low levels of oxygen in the blood, possibly leading to blood clots and stroke.
 - Smoking- cigarette and cigar use doubles the risk of stroke by damaging blood vessels.
 - Alcohol- excessive alcohol consumption is associated with stroke in some studies.



What You Can Do To Prevent a Stroke

- Don't smoke or vape and avoid secondhand smoke.
- Eat healthy foods low in saturated fat, trans fat and sodium (salt). Reduce sugary drinks.
- Do regular physical activity.
- Keep a healthy weight.
- Limit alcohol to one drink a day for women; two drinks per day for men.
- Take your medications as directed.
- Know your blood pressure. Optimal blood pressure is less than 120/80 mm Hg. Get your blood pressure checked regularly and work with your health care professional to manage it if it's high. High blood pressure is a leading cause of stroke.
- Reduce stress, which may contribute to behaviors such as overeating, lack of physical activity, unhealthy diet and smoking.
- Have regular medical checkups, including assessment of your risk for stroke.
- Get adequate sleep, 7-9 hours of sleep per night for adults; more for children and kids.