



STROKE

What is stroke?

A stroke, or “brain attack” happens when a blood clot blocks an artery in the brain, or a blood vessel (artery or vein) breaks and blood flow to an area of the brain is interrupted. When either of these things happens, the brain cells in the area start to die and brain damage happens.

When brain cells die, a person is no longer able to do the things that the affected area of the brain controls. Some of these are the ability to talk, move and remember. The amount of loss depends on how much brain damage there is. Sometimes people return to normal after a stroke, but more than 2/3 will have some kind of long term effects from it.

Who is at risk for a stroke?

The fact is anyone can have a stroke. But there are certain things a person can have that can make their chances of having a stroke higher. These are:

- Over age 55
- Male
- African-American, Hispanic or Asian-Pacific Islander
- Family history of stroke

The above things are beyond a person’s control, but there are some things that can be controlled that could increase a person’s risk of stroke. These are:

- High blood pressure
- Atrial Fibrillation (when the upper parts of the heart beat too fast)
- High cholesterol
- Diabetes
- Smoking
- Using too much alcohol
- Obesity/overweight

How can I prevent a stroke?

This is a good question, because 80 percent of all strokes can be prevented. The National Stroke Association lists ten ways you can take action to prevent a stroke:

- Know your blood pressure
- Find out if you have atrial fibrillation
- Stop smoking
- Use alcohol in moderation
- Find out if you have high cholesterol
- Follow your doctor’s instructions if you are a diabetic.
- Exercise
- Enjoy a lower salt diet
- Find out if you have blood circulation problems
- Know the symptoms of stroke

What are the symptoms of stroke?

Fast action is the best way to get the best outcome if a person has a stroke. Knowing the symptoms can mean the difference between getting important emergency care and delaying treatment. Symptoms of stroke include:

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

If you or someone you know is having a stroke, Act F.A.S.T and do this simple test:

- **Face.** Ask the person to smile. Does one side of their face droop?
- **Arms.** Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift down?
- **Speech.** Ask the person to repeat a simple sentence. Are their words slurred, and can they repeat the sentence correctly?
- **Time.** If the person shows any of these symptoms, time is important. Call 9-1-1 immediately.