

STROKE AWARENESS

AWARENESS MONTH



American Stroke Awareness Month

The Basics of Strokes

Did you know that each person's risk of stroke almost doubles every decade after age 55? Caregivers and seniors must be aware of this potentially fatal condition.

May is American Stroke Awareness Month. The American Stroke Association shares facts, tips, and other important info to help individuals prevent strokes and respond to strokes in the best way possible.

Preventable or Manageable Stroke Risks:

- High blood pressure
- Diabetes
- Poor diet
- Smoking
- Sedentary lifestyle
- High cholesterol
- Obesity

[\(The American Stroke Association\)](#)

The Basics of a Stroke

What is a Stroke?

A stroke happens when blood flow to part of the brain is cut off. The cells in the brain that do not receive oxygen via this blood flow will die. The dead cells in the brain can no longer operate, meaning whatever functions they performed prior are damaged or lost.

What Causes Strokes?

There are two types of strokes:



Hemorrhagic Stroke



Ischemic Stroke

- A **hemorrhagic stroke** is when a brain aneurysm bursts or a blood vessel in the brain leaks
- An **ischemic stroke** is when a blood vessel to the brain is blocked by a blood clot
- **Transient Ischemic Attacks (TIAs)** are "mini-strokes," when brain blood flow stops only briefly. These are caused by blood clots.

Who is at Greatest Risk of Stroke?

Some stroke risk factors are not preventable. For example, risk of stroke increases with age, especially after age 55. Women are more likely to stroke than men, and African Americans are at higher risk than Caucasians.

Other risk factors can be managed, reduced, or prevented entirely. For instance, Individuals with blood and circulatory diseases, like diabetes or arterial disease, are at greater risk. Those with unhealthy lifestyles, especially obesity or lack of exercise, are also more likely to have a stroke.





How are Strokes Treated?

Doctors must diagnose and treat strokes quickly to reduce the impact of the stroke and potentially save a life. The medication used to treat stroke immediately, tissue plasminogen activator, (or Alteplase IV r-tPA) must be administered within 3 hours of a stroke. Physical treatment to remove clots can also be performed.

What Happens After a Stroke?

Recovery from a stroke is lifelong because brain cells have died. The disabilities caused by strokes depend on the part of the brain affected. Many individuals lose partial use of a limb, elements of speech, or portions their memory. Therapies are often prescribed for months or years to help individuals adapt to disabilities caused by strokes.

(Stroke.org)

Signs of a Stroke and What to Do

An easy way to remember the signs of a stroke is the acronym F-A-S-T:

- F** **Face Drooping:** Does one side of the face droop or is it numb? Ask the person to smile.
- A** **Arm Weakness:** Is one arm weak or numb? Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?
- S** **Speech Difficulty:** Is speech slurred, are they unable to speak, or are they hard to understand? Ask the person to repeat a simple sentence like, "The sky is blue." Is the sentence repeated correctly?
- T** **Time to call 9-1-1:** If the person shows any of these symptoms, even if the symptoms go away, call 9-1-1 and get them to the hospital immediately.

(Instructions taken directly from American Heart Association)



Important Strokes Stats:

- Over **133,000 Americans** die of strokes each year
- **80%** of strokes are preventable
- Almost **1 in 6 American adults** with high blood pressure don't know they have it
- Stroke is the **5th leading cause of death** in the US
- About **¾ of strokes** are first-time strokes

(The American Stroke Association)



Home Care Tip

Many people do not realize that strokes are preventable. Caregivers should educate seniors about those risk factors they can control in order to reduce their risk of stroke.