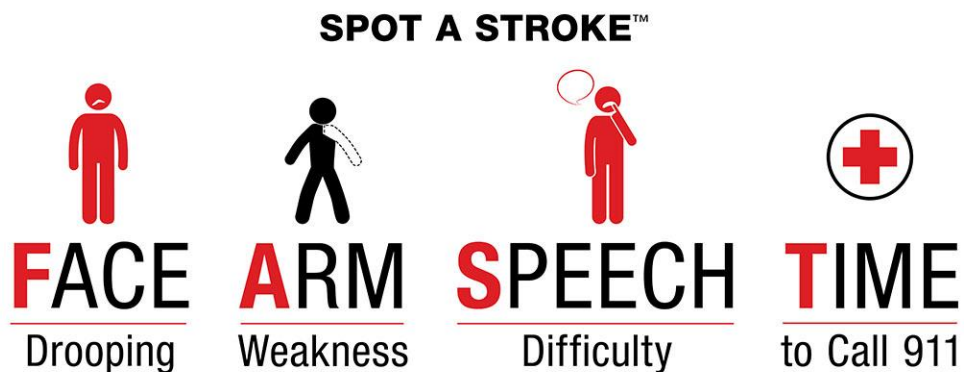


STROKE AWARENESS



StrokeAssociation.org



May is National Stroke Awareness Month an annual event arranged by the American Stroke Association (ASA). ASA's mission - to be a relentless force for a healthier world with fewer strokes. Advance cardiovascular health for everyone as a stroke is usually life-changing, physically and emotionally. The ASA started in 1998 as the American Heart Association (AHA) stroke division. During this month there is heightened awareness of strokes, their impact on patients, families and friends. When it comes to strokes every second counts. During this month the goal is to promote public awareness and reduce incidence of strokes in the United States (National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke).

STROKE STATISTICS

- ❖ Stroke is the second cause of death worldwide, the leading cause of long term disability but yet the most preventable cause of disability (stroke.org)
- ❖ Stroke ranks No. 5 among all causes of death in the USA (AHA)
- ❖ A stroke does not discriminate because of age, sex, race or socioeconomic standards.
- ❖ Death from stroke occurs every 3.5 minutes in the USA (cdc.gov)

- ❖ Hypertension is a main risk factor for stroke (www.stroke.org)
- ❖ Risk for stroke increases with age (cdc.gov)
- ❖ 80% of strokes are preventable (cdc.gov)

WOMEN AND STROKES

- ❖ Stroke is the No 3 cause of death in women and kills more women than men (stroke.org)
- ❖ One in five women will have a stroke (ASA)
- ❖ Each year about 55,000 more women than men have a stroke (ASA)
- ❖ Stroke kills over 80,000 women a year (ASA)
- ❖ Women make up nearly 60% of all stroke deaths
- ❖ Pregnancy – stroke risk increases 21 per 100,000 highest risk in 3rd trimester and postpartum period(ASA)
- ❖ Preeclampsia – high blood pressure that develops during pregnancy
- ❖ Birth control pills – have become safer but women who are already at risk for strokes should take extra precautions
- ❖ Hormone replacement therapy – should never be used to prevent stroke in post-menopausal women (ASA)
- ❖ Migraines with aura – associated with ischemic stroke in younger women. Increases more if women smoke or use oral contraceptives (ASA)
- ❖ Atrial fibrillation – stroke risk increased by twenty per cent in women over age 75 (ASA)
- ❖ Stroke is the third leading cause of death among African American and Hispanic women with African-American women more likely to die from a stroke(cdc.gov)
- ❖ Stroke kills twice as many women as breast cancer does(cdc.gov)

In women symptoms may present differently, vague, or atypical. May present with general weakness instead of one sided weakness, sudden hiccups, nausea, general weakness, palpitations, chest pain, shortness of breath, face, arm and limb pain (www.heart.org). Women are more likely to minimize their symptoms, and may drive themselves to the hospital. More than 2 in 5 women have blood pressure readings above the normal or are taking medication for blood pressure control (cdc.gov).

STROKE

Stroke is a “brain attack” and occurs when the blood supply to the brain is interrupted. Arteries are blood vessels that carry blood to the brain from the heart. The brain needs a constant supply of blood filled with oxygen and nutrients to function. Each artery in the brain supplies specific areas in the body. Brain cells die when blood flow is interrupted. The symptoms noticed will vary on the location and size of the stroke. Symptoms may range from mild weakness to inability to talk or walk. Some people experience complete recovery after a stroke but more than 2/3 of affected people have some type of disability (stroke.org).

Controllable Medical Risk Factors

- ❖ High Blood Pressure
- ❖ Diabetes
- ❖ Atrial Fibrillation
- ❖ High cholesterol
- ❖ Atherosclerosis
- ❖ Circulation Problems

Controllable Lifestyle Risk Factors

- Lack of Exercise
- Obesity
- Smoking/Tobacco

Uncontrollable Risk Factors

- ❖ Age
- ❖ Gender
- ❖ Race
- ❖ Family history
- ❖ Personal history of stroke/TIA
- ❖ Patent Foramen Ovale (hole in the heart)
- ❖ Fibro-muscular Dysplasia

There are three different types of stroke (ASA):

- ❖ Ischemic 87% - is caused by an occlusion/blockage in the blood vessels to the brain
- ❖ Hemorrhagic 13% - is caused by leaking or burst blood vessels in the brain. It is the least common type of stroke but most often results in death.

- ❖ Transient Ischemic Attacks (TIAs) or mini strokes are warning strokes and may happen before a major stroke. It is a temporary blockage of blood flow to the brain and does not usually cause permanent injury. A TIA must not be ignored as it may be warning of a pending larger stroke (stroke.org). The symptoms are temporary but may resemble a full-blown stroke. This is also a medical emergency as the person is almost 10 times more likely to have a stroke.

There is also cryptogenic stroke when the cause is unknown (heart.org).

STROKE SYMPTOMS – symptoms of stroke vary from person to person therefore it is most important to recognize not just one but all of them. Familiarize yourself with F.A.S.T. In addition to F.A.S.T. other symptoms may be sudden numbness or weakness of face, arm or leg affecting one side of the body. Sudden confusion, problem speaking or understanding what's spoken. Sudden trouble seeing from one or both eyes. Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination. Sudden severe headache with no known cause (stroke association.org). NSA states sudden severe headache with no known cause is also a symptom. Time is the most important factor in treating a stroke therefore you must know when your symptoms begin. Patients who arrive at the emergency room within 3 hours of their first stroke symptoms usually have decreased disability 3 months after diagnosis than those who delayed medical care. (cdc.gov).

EFFECTS OF A STROKE - The brain is an extremely complex organ that controls various body functions. When a stroke occurs and blood flow is interrupted the body is unable to function effectively. When the stroke occurs in the left side of the brain the right side of the body is affected. This produces paralysis on the right side of the body, speech/language problems, memory loss, with slow cautious behavioral style. When the stroke occurs in the right side of the brain the left side of the body is affected. This produces paralysis on the left side of the body, vision problems, with quick inquisitive behavioral style and memory loss (heart.org).

TREATMENT – remember if you experience any of these symptoms – IT'S TIME TO CALL 911. It is important to tell the operator, "I think I am having a stroke". This should allow you to be taken to a stroke designated hospital and receive the appropriate treatment for your type of stroke. Remember all strokes are not treated the same.

PREVENTION – NSA states medication adherence is necessary in preventing recurrent strokes. Over 50 percent of the aging population admits to forgetting to take their medication. Many also admit to not taking their medications as

prescribed. There are many factors that decrease medication adherence and each occurrence should be explored and corrected. Discuss any issues which prevent medication adherence with your provider there is help available. Remember the goal is healthier and longer lives. Remember AHA, ASA, state strokes are preventable, treatable and beatable.

- ❖ 80% of all strokes can be prevented with healthy behaviors
- ❖ Long-term affects of stroke may be minimized with immediate treatment
- ❖ Many people are surviving and beating strokes, lower your cholesterol, quit smoking, lose weight, start exercising (check with your doctor before starting any exercise program), consume a healthy diet reduce salt and fat intake. Read all food labels. Ask your health care provider about your blood pressure, blood sugar, blood results, do not accept normal or good ask for a copy and KNOW YOUR NUMBERS.
- ❖ Become an educated individual

A healthy diet is extremely important to reduce stroke risk factors. It will ensure your body receives the required nutrients to support brain, heart and physical well being. Stay hydrated drink enough water. Snack on fruits or veggies like watermelons, strawberries and cucumbers which are more than 95% water. Reduce your intake of salt, sugar, highly processed foods, saturated fat, trans fat, fried foods, pretzel and chips. Eat more plant based foods and large portions of vegetables such as leafy greens, peppers, onions, carrots, brussels sprouts, beans and lentils. Add vinegar including balsamic and nuts to salads as a healthy choice. Processed foods contain large amounts of salt, sugar and can cause plaque buildup in the arteries resulting in ischemic strokes (everydaythehealth.com).

WHO KNEW - in a recent survey 93% of respondents recognized sudden numbness on one side as a symptom of stroke. However, only 38% were aware of all major symptoms and knew to call 9111 when someone was having a stroke (montefiore.org)

A stroke is a medical emergency, prompt treatment is essential to decrease and prevent disabling or fatal brain damage. FAST treatment can even completely reverse the stroke so call 911 and state "I think I am having a stroke." Be comfortable with a false alarm. Most strokes can be prevented by controlling medical conditions and implementing healthy lifestyle changes.