

SpeakUP™



Speak Up: What you should know about stroke was developed in collaboration with

American Academy of Neurology

American Association of Neuroscience Nurses

American Heart Association/American Stroke Association

National Stroke Association

NIH/National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke

What are the early signs of stroke?

It is important to know the early signs of stroke. **Call 911 immediately** if you or someone you are with shows signs of having a stroke. Do not try to drive yourself to the hospital. It is important to get care quickly because you may be given a medicine that can reduce or even reverse damage caused by some strokes. It must be given soon after symptoms start. Treatment and recovery may depend on how soon you get care.

Stroke symptoms can vary. They can start slowly or come on quickly. You may wake up with the symptoms. Act quickly and **call 911 immediately** if these symptoms come on **SUDDENLY**:

- Numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Confusion or trouble speaking or understanding
- Trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Trouble walking, dizziness or loss of balance or coordination
- Severe headache

A stroke can happen with just one of these symptoms. Sometimes people have stroke-like symptoms that go away quickly (called a transient ischemic attack or TIA). Do not ignore these signs! Many people who have these warning signs go on to have a permanent stroke.

Stroke strikes fast. You should too. Call 911.

What are your risks for stroke?

People at risk for stroke include the elderly, those who have had a stroke or stroke-like symptoms, and people with a family history of stroke. Health problems and behaviors that increase your risk for stroke include:

- High blood pressure
- Heart disease
- High cholesterol
- Diabetes
- Some types of irregular heartbeat, such as atrial fibrillation
- A high sodium diet or unhealthy eating habits
- Lack of exercise
- Smoking
- Some illegal drug or alcohol abuse

What should you do if you are at increased risk for stroke?

- Talk to your doctor about your risks and how to lower them to help prevent a stroke. Know your blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar results. Ask what you can do to improve them.
- When talking to your doctor, write down the answers and make sure you understand what you are hearing. Do not be afraid to speak up or ask where you can find more information.
- Be prepared by finding out where to get the best stroke care possible. The American Heart Association/American Stroke Association publishes a free locator of Joint Commission certified stroke centers. To find one near you, go to <http://maps.heart.org/quality>.
- Ask a friend or relative to be your advocate. If you have a severe stroke, your advocate can be your eyes, ears, arms and legs if you are unable to do things for yourself.

For more information about stroke signs, risk and what to expect in recovery, go to The Joint Commission website, www.jointcommission.org/speakup.aspx, and download the free brochure *Speak Up: What you should know about stroke*.

The Joint Commission is the largest health care accrediting body in the United States that promotes quality and safety.



Helping health care organizations help patients