

Strokes: Signs and Symptoms

By Kate McCarthy

Edith suddenly felt odd as she sat at the table for lunch. The glass in her hand slipped from her fingers and everything looked blurry. A small trickle of the water she just sipped dribbled from the corner of her mouth. She tried to speak but her words slurred and came out wrong. Edith was having a stroke.

Fortunately Edith's family realized something was terribly wrong and got her to the hospital in time.

Strokes kill close to 800,000 people each year. According to the Internet Stroke Center, Stroke is the 3rd leading cause of death in the United States. It is also the leading cause of grave long-term disability.



Strokes cause long-term disability and death.

What is a Stroke

A stroke takes place when the brain doesn't get enough blood. When a Stroke is happening, the blood supply to part of the brain is interrupted or severely reduced, starving the brain tissue of oxygen and nutrients. Within minutes, brain cells begin to wither and die. This happens either due to the blood flow being blocked by a clot or because an artery feeding the brain has burst. The lack of blood flow to the brain is immediately evident and requires quick intervention to prevent permanent damage or even death.

Risk Factors

Risk for having a Stroke increases with age, but it is also affected by other factors:

High blood pressure	Having Hypertension increases the risk factor of experiencing Stroke by 4 to 6 times.
Diabetes	People with Diabetes often have damaged blood vessels in the brain and so have a 3 times greater risk of having a Stroke.
Heart Disease	Irregular heartbeat or damaged heart can contribute to having a Stroke.
Abnormal Cholesterol	Having too much the “bad” LDL cholesterol or too little of HDL “good” cholesterol can also trigger Stroke.
Obesity	Being overweight can contribute to all the other risk factors making Stroke all the more likely to strike.

Symptoms of Stroke

It is more likely that a bystander will recognize the Stroke than the person experiencing one. Knowing what the symptoms are and what to do is very important as every second counts when getting treatment. A Stroke is evident by the victim’s inability to speak, a awkward facial expression and cognitive confusion. Secondary symptoms may include dizziness, loss of balance and sudden onset of a headache. Some people experience blurred vision on one or both eyes, a weakness on one side of the body and nausea. Some people suddenly experience trouble walking.

F.A.S.T.

This acronym can help recognizing a Stroke as it is happening.

F – FACE Ask for a smile. Check if the face is drooping on one side.

A – ARMS Ask to raise their arms. Check if one arm drops down.

S – SPEECH Ask to repeat a simple phrase. Check for slurred or odd speech.

T – TIME If any of the signs are evident, call 911 immediately.

Getting to the hospital for treatment is important. The goal is to get a diagnosis within an hour of experiencing a Stroke and treatment within 3 hours so to avoid complications and long-term disabilities.



HomeAid Health Care
Helping Hands at Home

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