

# Stroke and TIA: What to know and do

Stroke is the leading cause of disability for adults. In the United States, 1 in 5 deaths are due to stroke. **Knowing the signs and symptoms of stroke and what to do can save a life.**

## What is a stroke? What is a TIA?

A **stroke** is when blood flow suddenly stops in a part of your brain. It can be caused by an **ischemic** [iss-KEE-mik] **stroke**, which is a blockage in a blood vessel. Or it can be caused when a blood vessel in your brain bursts. This is called **hemorrhagic** [heh-muh-RAY-jik] **stroke**. Brain cells need oxygen and nutrients carried by the blood. When blood flow is blocked, brain cells begin to die within minutes.

A **TIA (transient ischemic attack)** is a temporary blockage of blood flow to the brain. The clot typically dissolves or gets dislodged and symptoms usually last less than 5 minutes. Though a TIA does not cause permanent damage, it is often a warning of a coming stroke and should not be ignored. Get help as soon as you first notice symptoms, even if the symptoms go away.

## What are the signs and symptoms?

Stroke signs and symptoms include **SUDDEN**:

- Numbness or weakness of the face, arm, or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Confusion, trouble speaking, or understanding
- Trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Trouble walking, dizziness, or loss of balance or coordination
- Severe headache with no known cause

**If you notice any of these signs and symptoms, call 911 immediately. Note the exact time the person was last seen well, and give this time to the paramedics or hospital staff. This important information can affect treatment decisions.**

**During a stroke, every second counts.**

**B.E. F.A.S.T.! Call 911 if you see any of the stroke symptoms below:**

### B - BALANCE.

**Is there a sudden loss of balance or coordination?**

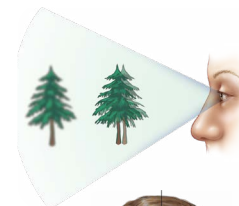
(To check, ask the person to walk a straight line or touch each finger to their nose.)



### E - EYES.

**Are there sudden vision changes?**

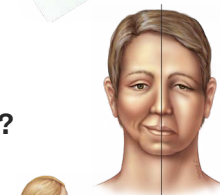
(To check, ask if the person has double vision or cannot see out of one eye.)



### F - FACE.

**Does one side of the face droop?**

(To check, ask the person to smile.)



### A - ARM.

**Does one arm drift downward?**

(To check, ask the person to raise both arms.)



### S - SPEECH.

**Are the words slurred? Is speech confused?**

(To check, ask the person to repeat a sentence.)

My blink a frown...  
thash not...  
What's happening?



### T - TIME TO CALL 911.

**When was the person last seen looking or acting normally?**

**Note that time and tell paramedics.**



## Am I at risk for stroke? What can I do?

Anyone can have a stroke. But studies show that you are more likely to have a stroke if you have certain risk factors, many of which YOU can control.

### Risk factors I CAN do something about:

Check the risk factors below that apply to you, then see instructions that apply:

- ☐ High blood pressure
- ☐ Cholesterol problems (high LDL or triglycerides, or low HDL)
- ☐ Diabetes
- ☐ Atrial fibrillation or other heart disease
- ☐ Atherosclerosis (fatty buildup in your arteries)



#### Partner with your doctor to manage risks.

- See your doctor at least once a year.
- Keep all follow-up appointments.
- Take prescribed medication (especially for high blood pressure, cholesterol, or diabetes) exactly as prescribed.

**Managing chronic illness is one of the best ways to prevent a stroke.**

- ☐ Smoking
- ☐ Drug or alcohol abuse



#### Stop smoking and using alcohol and drugs.

- Talk to your doctor about quitting smoking and reducing your alcohol and drug use.
- For help with quitting smoking, call this free, confidential phone line 1-888-567-TRUTH (1-888-567-8788), or 1-877-629-1585 for Spanish. You can also find helpful information on [WaytoQuit.org](http://WaytoQuit.org).

**Quit NOW to dramatically improve your health today and in the future.**

- ☐ Obesity
- ☐ Physical inactivity



#### Maintain a healthy weight, and get moving!

- Ask your doctor or a registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN) how to lose weight safely, slowly, and permanently.
- Do moderate exercise for 30 minutes on most days — and look for ways to be more active all day long.

**Healthy diet and exercise will protect your heart, brain, and bones and control blood pressure, cholesterol, and diabetes to prevent stroke.**

- ☐ Use of birth control pills (greater risk if you are over age 35 or if you smoke)
- ☐ On hormone replacement therapy



#### Talk to your doctor about your risk.

- Ask your doctor about other options for birth control.
- Quit smoking to reduce your birth control pill risk.

### Risk factors I CANNOT change:

Check the risk factors below that apply to you:

- ☐ **Ethnicity** (African Americans and Hispanics have a higher risk)
- ☐ **Family or medical history** of stroke or TIA (you or someone in your family has had a stroke or TIA in the past)
- ☐ **Age** (the older you are, the higher your risk)