

Stroke Fact Sheet

A stroke causes brain tissue to die. This can lead to brain damage, disability, and death. Stroke is the fifth leading cause of death in the U.S. It is the leading cause of serious long-term disability. This is disturbing because about 80% of strokes are preventable.

Symptoms

An easy way to remember the most common signs of stroke and how to respond is with the acronym F.A.S.T:

F = Face drooping: Ask the person to smile. Does one side droop?

A = Arm weakness: Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?

S = Speech difficulty: Ask the person to repeat a simple sentence. Are the words slurred?

T = Time to call 9-1-1

If the person shows any of these signs, call 9-1-1 immediately. Stroke treatment can begin in the ambulance.

Other common signs of stroke are:

- Sudden dizziness, trouble walking, or loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden severe headache with no known cause
- Sudden numbness of the face, arm, or leg
- Sudden confusion or trouble understanding others

Can stroke be prevented?

High blood pressure is the single most important treatable risk factor for stroke. Preventing, diagnosing, and controlling it through lifestyle changes and medicine are critical to reducing stroke risks. There are several steps you can take to reduce your risk for stroke:

- Eat a healthy diet low in sodium with plenty of fruits and vegetables.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Be physically active.
- Don't smoke and avoid secondhand smoke.
- Limit alcohol use.
- Prevent or manage your other health conditions.

How is Stroke Treated?

If you have a stroke, you may receive emergency care, treatment to prevent another stroke, or rehabilitation to help you relearn the skills you may have lost because of the stroke. You may receive all three. In addition, lifestyle changes, such as the ones listed above, can help lower your risk for future strokes.