

Stroke

Facts Everyone Needs to Know

A stroke affects the arteries in and around the brain. It usually happens suddenly when a blood vessel that carries oxygen and nutrients to the brain either bursts or becomes blocked by a clot. If a part of the brain doesn't get what it needs, brain tissue dies quickly.

Risk Factors

You should be alert to the risk factors for having a stroke. Be sure to discuss your medical concerns with your doctor and learn what you can do to reduce your risk of having a stroke.

These medical risk factors can be changed or controlled with proper care:

- High blood pressure
- Smoking
- Diabetes
- Artery disease
- Atrial fibrillation
- Other heart disease
- Obesity and lack of exercise
- TIAs (transient ischemic attacks)
- Certain blood disorders
- High blood fat level (total cholesterol of 200 mg/dL or higher)
- Use of hormone therapy.

The following risk factors for stroke unfortunately *cannot* be controlled:

- Increasing age
- Gender – Stroke is more common in men
- Previous stroke
- Heredity and race – If you have a close relative who has had a stroke, your risk of stroke is greater. African Americans have a higher risk of dying from a stroke than Caucasians do, because of higher risks of high blood pressure, diabetes and obesity.

Don't think of stroke as a disease that only older people get. Each year, about 600,000 Americans have a stroke and 160,000 die. Stroke is also the leading cause of serious, long-term disability. Almost 30 percent of strokes happen in people who are under age 65.

Learn these stroke symptoms.

If you have any of these stroke symptoms or if you have these symptoms and they go away, **CALL 911 IMMEDIATELY.** Stroke is always a medical emergency.

Suddenly you may:

Feel weak, numb or unable to move a certain body part, such as your face or arm. You may have these feelings on one side of your body

See things as blurred or fuzzy or have partial or complete vision loss

Have a very painful headache

Have trouble talking or understanding what others say

Feel dizzy, lose your balance or have trouble walking.

To prevent a stroke, you should:

Stop smoking

Eat foods low in salt and fats

Limit all alcoholic drinks

Exercise moderately 3 to 5 times per week, after speaking with your doctor

Get screened for blood pressure, diabetes, and cholesterol (blood fat level)

Take your blood pressure medicine as directed

Talk to your doctor about hormone therapy.

Get Help Immediately

Call 911 and go to the emergency room right away. Remember, you can recover from a stroke. **You must get help immediately.** Some drugs can help to open your blood vessels, but these must be given to you within three hours of your first symptom(s).

When you arrive at the UVa Emergency Department, you will get tests to learn if you are having a stroke or if you have a different condition. If you are having a stroke, you may be given a clot-dissolving drug as soon as possible. Act quickly!

To take the stroke quiz and learn more about strokes, please visit:

www.uvastroke.com

You can also call your family doctor to make an appointment to be assessed for your risk of having a stroke. **For help finding a doctor, call 434-924-DOCS.**