

# stroke prevention, awareness & recovery

**E**very four minutes someone in the U.S. dies of a stroke. A stroke occurs when a blood vessel that carries oxygen and nutrients to the brain is either blocked by a clot or bursts. When that happens, parts of the body's functioning are impacted.

It is estimated that up to 50 percent of strokes are preventable if you follow a heart healthy lifestyle. This includes avoiding smoking and second-hand smoke, improving your eating habits, staying physically active, maintaining a healthy blood pressure, decreasing your levels of stress and ensuring you have regular medical check-ups. Ask your doctor if you have any questions about how to minimize your risk.

Should you have a stroke, quick action can minimize the effects of a stroke. The American Stroke Association suggests that the acronym F.A.S.T. is an easy way to remember the sudden signs of stroke. If you spot these signs in yourself or another person, call 9-1-1 right away. F.A.S.T. is:

## Face Drooping

Does one side of the face droop or is it numb? Ask the person to smile. Is the person's smile uneven?

## Arm Weakness

Is one arm weak or numb? Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?

## Speech Difficulty

Is speech slurred? Is the person unable to speak or hard to understand? Ask the person to repeat a simple sentence, like "The sky is blue." Is the sentence repeated correctly?

## Time to call 9-1-1

If someone shows any of these symptoms, even if the symptoms go away, call 9-1-1 and get the person to the hospital immediately. Check the time so you'll know when the first symptoms appeared.

## Recovery

It can take time to heal from a stroke. The lives of the 7 million Americans who have experienced a stroke and the loved ones who care for them can be greatly affected.

"Should you have a stroke, you may need help adjusting to life at home after you are discharged from the hospital," says Judy Brady, RN, BSN, MPA-HA, Administrator / Director of Clinical Services with THE MEDICAL TEAM, a home care agency operating in Northern Virginia. You may need the help of qualified nurses to learn how to care for yourself and ways to adjust your lifestyle to improve the health of your heart. Some severe cases of stroke may require continuous 24/7 care.

Brady adds, "When choosing a rehabilitation program, be sure to choose one whose goal is to improve function



**Stroke victims can adjust their lifestyles to improve the health of their hearts.**

so that the stroke survivor can become as independent as possible. THE MEDICAL TEAM strives to preserve the dignity of our patients and ensure that the stroke survivor is motivated to relearn all the basic life skills, like dressing and walking, which he may have lost." GRL

Source: American Stroke Association, [www.strokeassociation.org](http://www.strokeassociation.org), National Stroke Association, [www.stroke.org](http://www.stroke.org), and WebMD, [www.webmd.com](http://www.webmd.com)



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