

## Stroke Resources

### Stroke Family Support Network

1-888-4STROKE

[www.strokeassociation.org](http://www.strokeassociation.org)

This is an outreach program of the American Stroke Association.

The Stroke Family "Warmline" (1-888-4STROKE) is supported by stroke survivors and/ or caregivers who provide support and helpful information to stroke survivors and their families.

Stroke Connection Magazine, is a helpful resource for stroke survivors and caregivers. People can subscribe to the magazine by calling the Warmline or accessing the Stroke Association's website.

Support Groups can be located by contacting your local hospital, Infoline or the American Stroke Association's Warmline.

Infoline

Dial 2-1-1

[www.infoline.org](http://www.infoline.org)

## Stroke Coordinators of Connecticut



American Heart Association® | American Stroke Association®

*Learn and Live®*

This education booklet was produced by the Stroke Coordinators of Connecticut in conjunction with the American Stroke Association.

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## Stroke / TIA

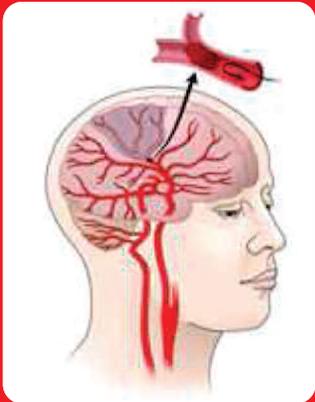
### Patient and Family Education Booklet

**Building healthier lives,  
free of cardiovascular diseases and stroke  
for Connecticut Residents.**

**Learn to recognize a stroke.  
Because time lost is brain lost.**

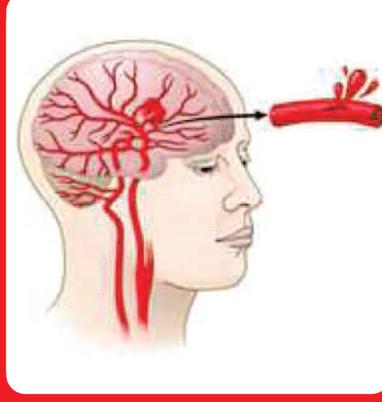
## What is a stroke?

There are two types of stroke. A stroke occurs when blood flow to the brain is interrupted by a blocked or broken blood vessel. When blood stops flowing to certain parts of the brain patients may have symptoms such as weakness, speech and/or visual problems.



### Ischemic Stroke

Blood clot stops the flow of blood to an area of the brain.



### Hemorrhagic Stroke

Weakened/diseased blood vessels rupture blood leaks into brain tissue

People who have had a stroke are at risk of having another stroke. It is important to know your risk factors for stroke and reduce the chances of having another stroke. You can do this by following the recommendations in this booklet. Please ask your nurse or doctor any questions about this information or about your recovery care.

## Did you know...

Each year about 795,000 people experience a new or recurrent stroke.

On average, every 40 seconds someone in the United States has a stroke.

A person who has had one or more TIAs is more likely to have a stroke than someone of the same age and sex who hasn't had a TIA.

The risk of ischemic stroke in current smokers is about double that of nonsmokers after adjustment for other risk factors.

Spanish-speaking Hispanics are less likely to know all stroke symptoms, and far less likely to know all heart attack symptoms, than English-speaking Hispanics, non-Hispanic blacks and non-Hispanic whites.

## The good news...

You can improve your health, even if you've had a stroke. A healthy lifestyle plays a big part in decreasing disability and death from stroke and heart attack. Here are the steps to take:

- Don't smoke.
- Improve your eating habits.
- Be physically active.
- Take your medicine as directed.
- Get your blood pressure checked and control it if it's high.
- Reach and maintain a healthy weight.
- Decrease your stress level.
- Seek emotional support when it's needed.
- Have regular medical checkups.

## What to do after you leave the hospital: Follow-up medical care after discharge.

- You must take your medications exactly as ordered by your doctor. This will reduce your risk of another stroke. Do not make any changes to these medications until you see your primary care doctor or neurologist.
- The medications should help you reach the goal of lowering some risk factors.
- Do not stop taking your medications without first speaking to your doctor.
- It is important that you follow-up with your doctor after you leave the hospital. Your doctor will review your medications and treatment plan. Be sure to bring your list of medications with you to all of your clinic visits.
- Your doctor will help you get the right rehabilitation services to help you with your recovery.
- Call 9-1-1 if you have recurrent stroke symptoms!



## Risk factors that cannot be changed or controlled:

- Advanced Age**  
Stroke affects people of all ages. Stroke risk increases with older age. After the age of 55, the risk of having a stroke more than doubles for every ten years of life.
- Gender**  
Men's stroke rates are greater than women's at younger ages, but not at older ages. Each year about 55,000 more women than men have a stroke. Women who take birth control pills and have other risk factors are at an increased risk for stroke. These other risk factors include high blood pressure, migraines or a smoking history.
- Heredity and Race**  
Having a close blood relative such as your mother or father that has had a stroke increases your risk of having a stroke. African Americans have twice the risk of having a stroke when compared to whites. This is partly due to higher rates of high blood pressure and diabetes in this group. Hispanic Americans are also at a higher risk of having a stroke.
- Previous Stroke**  
If you have had a stroke you are at a higher risk of having another stroke. That is why it is important to make changes in your life to reduce the risks that you can control.

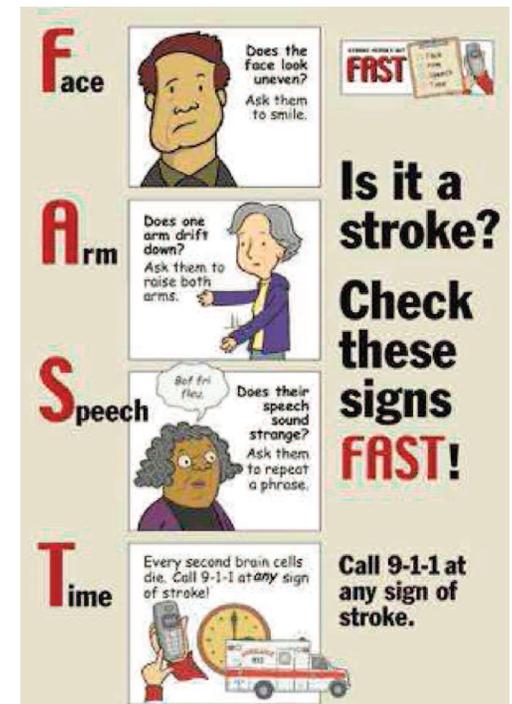


## Risk factors you can change or control:

- High Blood Pressure (Hypertension)**  
High blood pressure is the most common cause of stroke. It is the most important risk factor to control. Causes of high blood pressure can include a family history of high blood pressure and excessive weight. A high salt diet, smoking, inactivity, stress and race are also factors (African Americans develop high blood pressure earlier in life).
- Diabetes**  
Diabetes increases your risk of stroke because high blood sugar changes the walls of the blood vessels in the brain. This causes blood vessels in the brain to clot or leak.
- Carotid or other Artery Disease**  
The carotid arteries in your neck supply most of the blood to your brain. Damage caused by fatty buildup inside the artery can cause blockages and stroke.
- Atrial Fibrillation (a-fib) or other heart disease**  
When the heart doesn't pump effectively (called a-fib) blood can clot, increasing the risk of a stroke. Other types of heart disease can increase the risk of stroke too.
- Blood Disorders**  
Check your risk for stroke with your doctor if you have a known blood disorder.
- Tobacco Use**  
Cigarettes and other tobacco products can cause damage to the blood vessels. This can increase the risk of stroke. 
- TIA's (Transient Ischemic Attack)**  
A TIA is a "warning stroke" or a "mini stroke" that produces stroke-like symptoms. Symptoms may resolve within minutes or hours. There is no lasting damage to the brain. About a third of people who experience a TIA have a stroke within a year. Recognizing and treating TIAs can reduce the risk of a stroke.
- High Cholesterol**  
Too much cholesterol can cause fatty buildup in your blood vessels. This can clog an artery causing a stroke. Ask your doctor to check your cholesterol to keep tabs on your numbers.
- Physical Inactivity and Obesity**  
Both of these factors increase your chance of having heart disease or a stroke.
- Excessive Alcohol Intake and Illegal Drug Use**  
More than an average of one drink per day for women and two per day for men can raise your blood pressure. Binge drinking can also lead to a stroke. Intravenous drug use carries a risk of stroke. Cocaine use has been linked with sudden cardiac arrest and stroke.

## Warning signs and symptoms of stroke:

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body.
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding.
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes.
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, or loss of balance or coordination.
- Sudden, severe headache with no known cause.



## What to do if you are having symptoms:

### CALL 9-1-1

- Not all the warning signs occur in every stroke. Don't ignore signs of stroke, even if they go away!
- Check the time. When did the first warning sign or symptom start? You or the person who is with you will be asked this important question later. Treatment needs to occur as soon as possible. A clot-busting drug or other treatments may reduce long term disability for patients with an ischemic stroke, the most common stroke type.
- If you have one or more stroke symptoms, don't delay! Immediately call 9-1-1. Do not drive yourself to the nearest hospital!
- Expect the person experiencing symptoms to resist going to the hospital. Don't take "no" for an answer because Time Lost is Brain Lost.
- When communicating with Emergency Medical Services or the hospital, make sure to use the word "STROKE."

