

Stroke

Stroke, as the fifth leading cause of death and the number one cause of long-term disability in the United States¹, is a significant public health concern. Nonmodifiable risk factors of age, ethnicity, genetics, and family history contribute to significant stroke risk. Potentially modifiable risk factors include hypertension, hyperlipidemia, diabetes mellitus, obesity, and smoking². Making healthy choices paired with lifestyle changes is a great start to addressing the modifiable risk factors. In addition, discuss these risk factors with your primary care provider to see if additional therapeutics are right for you.

In the event of a stroke, rapid treatment is essential. Time sensitive medications exist therefore it is critical to identify the signs of a stroke and get the patient to medical care as fast as possible. The American Stroke Association³ (a division of the American Heart Association) recommends the acronym F.A.S.T. when identifying a potential stroke.

F: Face Drooping. Is one side of the person's face drooping or numb? Ask the individual to smile and inspect the symmetry of the left and right side of their face. Asymmetrical or uneven facial tone and smiling is a sign of a potential stroke.

A: Arm Weakness. Does the individual feel that one arm is weak or numb? Ask them to raise both arms above their head and observe the response. If one arm cannot be lifted, or is lifted and begins to drift downward, this is a sign of a potential stroke.

S: Speech Difficulty. Is the individual slurring their speech? Ask them to speak and pay close attention to their words and facial expressions. Difficulty speaking can be a sign of a potential stroke.

T: Time. A stroke is a time sensitive emergency. Activate the emergency medical system as soon as possible to get the individual to appropriate care.

Other signs of a stroke include numbness or weakness of face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body. Confusion, trouble speaking or understanding speech. Trouble seeing with one or both eyes. Trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination. Severe headache with no known cause. These are all symptoms of stroke and should serve as red flags if noticed in others.

- 1) CDC, Mortality in United States, 2020.
- 2) Caprio FZ, Sorond FA. Cerebrovascular Disease: Primary and Secondary Stroke Prevention. Med Clin North Am. 2019 Mar;103(2):295-308. doi: 10.1016/j.mcna.2018.10.001. Epub 2018 Nov 28. PMID: 30704682.
- 3) <https://www.stroke.org/en/about-stroke/stroke-symptoms>

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