

For More Information

For more information on stroke, call the American Stroke Association at 1-888-478-7653 or visit online at StrokeAssociation.org

Also sign up to get *Stroke Connection*, a free magazine for stroke survivors and caregivers.

The following are important take away points:

- Lifestyle is key
- Seek help immediately – Call **911**
- Note time of symptom onset

To schedule a Stroke Information Session, please do not hesitate to contact Susan Hartmus, RN, at Inova HealthSource at 703-698-2405 or susan.hartmus@inova.org

Resources for this article are from the American Stroke website at www.strokeassociation.org and The Clinical Practice of Neurological and Neurosurgical Nursing, sixth edition, by Joanne V. Hickey.

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Articles in this newsletter are not a substitute for the care and advice of medical professionals. When you have a question or need medical advice, diagnosis or treatment, consult your physician.

This newsletter is produced by Inova Health System in conjunction with your faith community. If you prefer not to receive this newsletter, please notify the appropriate personnel in your faith community.

Inova Health System is a not-for-profit healthcare system based in Northern Virginia that consists of hospitals and other health services, including emergency- and urgent-care centers, home care, nursing homes, mental health and blood donor services, and wellness classes. Governed by a voluntary board of community members, Inova's mission is to improve the health of the diverse community it serves through excellence in patient care, education and research. Inova provides a healthy environment for its patients, families, visitors, staff and physicians by prohibiting tobacco use on its campuses.

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For Your Health

What is a Stroke?

Stroke is a disease that affects the arteries leading to and within the brain.

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, part of the brain cannot get the blood it needs, so it starts to die.

On average, every 40 seconds someone in the U.S. has a stroke.

Stroke ranks number three among all causes of death, behind diseases of the heart and cancer. Every three to four minutes someone dies of a stroke.

The American Heart Association has identified several factors that increase the risk for heart disease and stroke. Some risk factors you can't control such as increasing age, family health history, race and gender:

Age – The chance of having a stroke approximately doubles for each decade of life after age 55. While stroke is common among the elderly, a lot of people under 65 also have strokes.

Family health history – Your stroke risk is greater if a parent, grandparent, sister or brother has had a stroke.

Race – African Americans have a much higher risk of death from a stroke than Caucasians do. This is partly because they have higher risks of high blood pressure, diabetes and obesity.

Gender – Stroke is more common in men than in women. More men than women will have a stroke in a given year. However, more than half of total stroke deaths occur in women. At all ages, more women than men die of stroke. Use of birth control pills and pregnancy pose special risks for women.

The Types of Stroke



There are two major categories of stroke:

Ischemic stroke, which is caused by a clot obstructing the flow of blood to the brain;

Hemorrhagic stroke, which is caused by a blood vessel rupturing and preventing blood flow to the brain.

The term transient ischemic attack (TIA) is a temporary brain deficit and clears completely in less than 24 hours. It is more accurately characterized as a “warning stroke,” a warning you should take seriously.

Controllable Risk Factors

Risk factors that can be modified treated or controlled are:

Monitoring blood pressure. High blood pressure is the leading cause of stroke and the most important controllable risk factor for stroke.

Quitting tobacco. The nicotine and carbon monoxide in cigarette smoke damage the cardiovascular system in many ways. The use of oral contraceptives combined with cigarette smoking greatly increases stroke risk.

Eating a low fat diet. A diet containing five or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day may reduce the risk of stroke.

Exercising regularly and monitoring your weight will decrease your risk for stroke. Try to get a total of at least 30 minutes of activity on most or all days.

Controlling your diabetes. Diabetes is an independent risk factor for stroke and the presence of the disease increases your risk for stroke. Take your medications as prescribed. Talk with your doctor, nurse or other healthcare professionals.

Stroke Symptoms

The signs and symptoms of a stroke are:

- 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, loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden severe headache with no known cause

If you or someone you are with experiences any of these symptoms, dial 9-1-1 immediately. Stroke is a medical emergency. Don't wait to see if the symptoms go away. “Time is Brain.”

Call 911 Immediately!

The Emergency Medical Services (EMS) has been trained to recognize the signs and symptoms of stroke. They work closely with the hospitals to get the patient to the Emergency Department as fast as possible for treatment.

In the emergency room, your doctor or stroke emergency team may:

- Ask you when the symptoms of the stroke started
- Ask you about your medical history
- Conduct a physical and neurological examination
- Have certain laboratory tests done
- Do a CAT scan or MRI
- Study the results of other tests that might be needed

