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**Fact 13:** There are ways to help prevent strokes.

After you have had a stroke, you are at risk for having another one. You can make some important lifestyle changes that can reduce your risk of stroke and improve your overall health.

- Don't smoke. Smoking can more than double your risk of stroke. Avoid secondhand smoke too.
- Eat a heart-healthy diet that includes plenty of fish, fruits, vegetables, beans, high-fiber grains and breads, and olive oil. Eat less salt too.
- Try to do moderate activities at least 2½ hours a week. It's fine to be active in blocks of 10 minutes or more throughout your day and week. Your doctor can suggest a safe level of exercise for you.
- Stay at a healthy weight.
- Control your cholesterol and blood pressure.
- If you have diabetes, keep your blood sugar as close to normal as possible.
- Limit alcohol. Having more than 1 drink a day (if you are female) or more than 2 drinks a day (if you are male) increases the risk of stroke.
- Take a daily aspirin or other medicines if your doctor advises it.
- Avoid getting sick from the flu. Get a flu shot every year.

**Fact 14:** It is best to work closely with your doctor.

Go to all your appointments, and take your medicines just the way your doctor says to.



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Hugh Chatham Memorial Hospital

# Stroke Education

14 Important Facts  
You Should Know  
About Stroke



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*Stroke is the third leading cause of death in the U.S. When you know about strokes, their causes, their symptoms, and what actions to take, you have information that may save a life or prevent a disability. This brochure presents 14 important facts you should know about strokes.*

**Fact 1:** 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 (and oxygen) it needs, so it starts to die.

**Fact 2:** There are two major types of stroke:

- An ischemic stroke which is caused by a clot obstructing the flow of blood to the brain.
- A hemorrhagic stroke which is caused by a blood vessel rupturing and preventing blood flow to the brain.

**Fact 3:** Brain damage can begin within minutes, so it is important to know the symptoms of stroke and act fast.

Quick treatment can help limit damage to the brain and increase the chance of a full recovery. Call 911 if you see any signs of a stroke in yourself or anyone.

**Fact 4:** Symptoms of a stroke happen quickly. A stroke may cause:

- Sudden numbness, tingling, weakness, or paralysis in your face, arm, or leg, especially on only one side of your body.
- Sudden vision changes.
- Sudden trouble speaking.
- Sudden confusion or trouble understanding simple statements.
- Sudden problems with walking or balance.
- A sudden, severe headache that is different from past headaches.

**Fact 5:** If you think someone may be having a stroke, do this simple Act F.A.S.T test from the National Stroke Association:

- **Face**—Ask the person to smile. Does one side of the face droop?
- **Arms**—Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?
- **Speech**—Ask the person to repeat a simple sentence. Are the words slurred? Can the person repeat the sentence correctly?
- **Time**—If the person shows any of these symptoms, time is important! Call 911 or get to the hospital fast. Brain cells are dying.

**Fact 6:** See your doctor if you have symptoms that seem like a stroke, even if they go away quickly.

You may have had a transient ischemic attack (TIA), sometimes called a mini-stroke. A TIA is a warning that a stroke may happen soon. Getting early treatment for a TIA can help prevent a stroke.

**Fact 7:** A hemorrhagic stroke can be hard to treat.

Doctors may do surgery or other treatments to stop bleeding or reduce pressure on the brain. Medicines may be used to control blood pressure, brain swelling, and other problems.

**Fact 8:** To find out what kind of stroke it is, the doctor will do a type of X-ray called a CT scan of the brain, which can show if there is bleeding.

The doctor may order other tests to find the location of the clot or bleeding, check for the amount of brain damage, and check for other conditions that can cause symptoms similar to a stroke.

**Fact 9:** Ischemic stroke treatment focuses on restoring blood flow to the brain.

If you get to the hospital right away after symptoms begin, doctors may use a medicine that dissolves blood clots. Research shows that this medicine can improve recovery from a stroke, especially if it is given within 90 minutes of the first symptoms. Other medicines may be given to prevent blood clots and control symptoms.

**Fact 10:** After your condition is stable, treatment shifts to preventing other problems and future strokes.

You may need to take a number of medicines to control conditions that put you at risk for stroke, such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and diabetes. Some people need to have a surgery to remove plaque buildup from the blood vessels that supply the brain (carotid arteries).

**Fact 11:** Smoking can more than double your risk of stroke.

So stop smoking and avoid secondhand smoke too.

**Fact 12:** The best way to get better after a stroke is to start stroke rehab.

Stroke rehab works to help you regain skills you lost or to make the most of your remaining abilities. Stroke rehab can also help you take steps to prevent future strokes. You have the greatest chance of regaining abilities during the first few months after a stroke. So it is important to start rehab soon after a stroke and do a little every day.