

# STROKE “Brain Attack”

## AWARENESS

**A stroke is a disorder in which the arteries to the brain become blocked or sometimes rupture, resulting in death of brain tissue.** The Merck Manual of Medical Information – 2<sup>nd</sup> Home Edition

It may save your life if you know the signs of a stroke.  
**Every second counts:**

- 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

Symptoms of a transient ischemic attack (TIA) are identical to a stroke but last only a brief time. It can be a warning sign of a stroke.

Know the risk factors:

- Diabetes Mellitus
- High Blood Cholesterol and other Lipids
- High Blood Pressure
- Metabolic Syndrome
- Overweight and Obesity
- Physical Inactivity
- Tobacco

Sources of information:  
The Merck Manual of Medical Information  
[www.americanheartassociation.org](http://www.americanheartassociation.org)  
[www.americanstrokeassociation.org](http://www.americanstrokeassociation.org)

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## How to Respond

Symptoms of a stroke are sometimes difficult to identify. Lack of awareness spells disaster. Use of this test could result in prompt diagnosis and treatment of a stroke and prevent brain damage.

Researchers and doctors have urged the general public to learn the three questions to recognize a stroke.

- **Ask the individual to smile.**
- **Ask him or her to raise both arms**
- **Ask the person to speak a simple sentence**

If he or she has trouble with any of these tasks, call 9-1-1 immediately and describe the symptoms to the dispatcher. Treatment of a stroke should begin quickly to help prevent further brain damage.

*How quickly?* There is a **3 hour window** between the onset of symptoms and beginning clot-busting drugs to reduce brain damage from a blockage. It is imperative to go to a full service Emergency Room and receive a cat scan (CT of the head) to rule out a bleeding vessel so anticoagulant therapy can begin.

*Created by Betty Minton, RN, Health Ministries Nurse*

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