

Stroke 101

Stroke by the Numbers (Nationwide):

- The 5th leading cause of death in the U.S. – about 130,000 people die from stroke each year.
- Every year, about 800,000 people have a stroke. That's one stroke every 4 minutes.
- 80% of strokes can be prevented!

Be Stroke Smart!

Learn the signs of a stroke and call 911 if you think someone might be having one. Getting treatment fast can help save lives and reduce problems from the stroke.

What is a Stroke?

A stroke happens when the blood flow to the brain is blocked. This can happen because of a blood clot or a burst blood vessel. When this happens, parts of the brain get damaged or die. A stroke can hurt any part of the brain, including areas that control movement, thinking, speaking, and breathing.

In Delaware, stroke is the **4th leading cause of death**.

If You Think Someone Is Having a Stroke, Do the BE FAST Test:

B = Balance

Is the person having trouble with balance or coordination?

E = Eyes

Is the person seeing blurry or double? Do they suddenly lose vision in one or both eyes? Are they having a bad headache?

F = Face Drooping

Does one side of their face droop or feel numb? Ask them to smile. Is the smile uneven? Does the face feel tingly or numb?

A = Arm Weakness

Is one arm or leg weak or numb? Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift down? Is there tingling or numbness in one arm or leg?

S = Speech Difficulty

Is the person's speech slurred or hard to understand? Ask them to repeat the sentence, "The sky is blue." Do they say it right?

T = Time to Call 911

If the person has any of these symptoms, even if they go away, call 911 right away and get them to the hospital.

What to Remember:

Make note of when the symptoms first started. This will help doctors decide how to treat the person.

Don't drive yourself or let someone else drive you to the hospital. Call 911 so that medical help can start on the way to the hospital.

What About "Mini-Stroke"?

If someone has stroke symptoms that go away after a few minutes, it may be a **transient ischemic attack (TIA)**. TIAs are signs that a real stroke could happen later. Paying attention to TIAs can help prevent a full stroke.

Types of Strokes

There are two types of strokes: **Ischemic** (85% of strokes) and **Hemorrhagic** (15% of strokes).

Ischemic Stroke

This happens when a blood clot blocks blood flow in the brain. The clot can form in the brain (called **thrombotic**) or come from another part of the body (called **embolic**).

Some causes of blood clots include:

- Hardening of the arteries (called **atherosclerosis**), caused by high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol, or smoking.
- Irregular heartbeat (**atrial fibrillation**).

Ischemic stroke treatment:

Doctors may use medicine or other procedures to restore blood flow. A healthy lifestyle and medicine can help prevent another stroke. Stroke rehab programs can help people recover.

Hemorrhagic Stroke

This happens when a weak blood vessel in the brain bursts or leaks. This can cause bleeding in or near the brain. Hemorrhagic strokes are less common but can be more dangerous.

Causes of weakened blood vessels include:

- A brain aneurysm (a weak part of a blood vessel that may burst).
- A brain AVM (an abnormal group of weak blood vessels).

- High blood pressure that is not controlled.

Hemorrhagic stroke treatment:

Doctors stop the bleeding and prevent more damage. Surgery may be needed to fix the blood vessel or remove the blood. Medicine can help stop the bleeding or manage high blood pressure.

Reducing Your Risk for Stroke

What makes you more likely to have a stroke?

Some risk factors can be treated, while others can't.

Risk factors you can control:

- **Atrial fibrillation:** An irregular heartbeat can lead to blood clots and strokes.
- **Atherosclerosis:** This is when fatty deposits build up inside the arteries.
- **Diabetes:** High blood sugar can cause hardening of the arteries.
- **High blood pressure:** Over time, it can damage arteries and lead to stroke.
- **High cholesterol:** This can cause fatty deposits in the arteries.
- Other health problems like blood clotting problems can also increase stroke risk.

Lifestyle changes you can make:

- **Smoking:** Smoking or secondhand smoke increases the risk of stroke.
- **Being overweight:** Extra weight can cause high blood pressure, heart problems, and diabetes.
- **Drinking too much alcohol:** More than 2 drinks a day for men and 1 drink a day for women increases stroke risk.
- **Exercise:** Being active can reduce stroke risk.
- **Diet:** Eating healthy foods like fruits, vegetables, and whole grains helps keep your heart and arteries healthy.
- **Stress:** Too much stress can raise your heart rate and blood pressure.

Risk factors you can't control:

- Having had a previous stroke or TIA.
- A family history of stroke.
- Being older.
- Being African American, Hispanic, Native American, or South Asian American.
- Being female.
- Having certain problems during pregnancy, like gestational diabetes or high blood pressure.