

# Stroke...



## It's about Time

Stroke is a medical emergency. The longer you wait to call 9-1-1 when you are having any signs or symptoms, the more you lose brain cells or your ability to return to a normal life.

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### What is a stroke?

A stroke is an event/episode that causes damage to part of the brain tissue as a result of a loss of blood and oxygen. This can occur within a few minutes or hours. A stroke is often referred to as a “brain attack.”

#### What happens during a stroke?

A stroke occurs when the blood vessels to the brain rupture or become blocked, preventing blood from reaching a part of the brain tissue. Brain tissue needs a constant supply of oxygen and nutrients to stay alive and functioning. When the supply of oxygen is cut off for three or four minutes, the tissue begins to die.

#### What are the types of stroke?

- **Hemorrhagic stroke** is the most serious. This type of stroke occurs when a blood vessel in the brain ruptures.
- **Ischemic stroke** occurs when a blood vessel in the brain develops a clot, cutting off oxygen supplied to the brain
- **Transient Ischemic attack (TIA)**, also referred to as a “mini-stroke,” occurs when the blood flow to part of the brain is cut off for a short period of time, usually less than 15 minutes. A TIA is a warning sign that something is wrong and should be treated seriously.

#### What are the warning signs of a stroke?

- 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.

**A stroke is a medical emergency. If you experience any of the major warning signs, call 9-1-1 immediately.**



If the symptoms appear for only a very short time and then disappear, it could be a Transient Ischemic Attack or TIA. It is important to call 9-1-1 whenever you have any symptoms.

## What can I do to prevent a stroke?

There are many helpful handouts on stroke prevention topics.

Visit [www.hearhighway.org](http://www.hearhighway.org) for more information on the items with an asterisk (\*).

1. Know your blood pressure. If it is elevated, work with your doctor to keep it under control. High blood pressure is the leading cause of stroke.\*
2. Find out if you have atrial fibrillation.
3. If you smoke, quit. Smoking doubles your risk for stroke.\*
4. If you drink, do so in moderation.
5. Know our cholesterol number. If it is high, work with your doctor to control it.\*
6. If you are diabetic, follow your doctor's recommendations.\*
7. Enjoy a lower sodium (salt) and lower fat diet.\*
8. Ask your doctor if you have circulation problems.
9. Get regular exercise.
10. Maintain a healthy weight.\*
11. Manage your stress.\*
12. See your doctor regularly.
13. If you have any stroke symptoms, call 9-1-1 immediately.

## What are the risk factors for stroke?

- High blood pressure (hypertension)
- High cholesterol
- Heart disease
- Smoking
- Heavy drinking (more than two drinks a day)
- Overweight and physical inactivity
- Past history of stroke or TIA
- Diabetes
- Atrial fibrillation - an uncontrolled heart rhythm that occurs when the upper chambers of the heart or atria beats so fast that the atria can only quiver
- Peripheral artery disease - a condition that causes poor circulation in the legs
- Certain blood disorders
- Certain illegal drugs

About half a million American suffer from a stroke each year. These strokes are often preventable by making lifestyle changes.

### Remember!!!

- Seconds matter...Call 9-1-1 because it is the quickest access to an ambulance and the right treatment.
- Know the warning signs.
- If you notice the warning signs, note the time when they started.

## What treatments exist for stroke? And...How much time do I have?

The only drug currently approved by the FDA (Federal Drug Administration) is a thrombolytic agent called Tissue Plasminogen Activator (TPA). This is often referred to as "clot buster" medication. TPA must be given **within the first three hours** of an onset of stroke symptoms. That is why it is important to seek medical help immediately.



**HEART DISEASE &  
STROKE PREVENTION PROGRAM**  
UTAH DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH