

May is Stroke Awareness Month. The following information, derived from the National Stroke Association's website, includes some important facts about stroke that you need to know:

## Stroke Awareness Month

- Stroke is a brain attack, cutting off vital blood flow and oxygen to the brain.
- In the U.S., stroke is the third leading cause of death, killing 160,000 people each year, and the leading cause of adult disability.
- Approximately 780,000 strokes will occur this year; however 500,000 of those strokes can be prevented.
- Stroke can happen to anyone at any time, regardless of race, sex or age.

**Recognizing symptoms. Few Americans know the symptoms of stroke. Learning them - and acting FAST when they occur - could save your life or the life of a loved one.**

### Common stroke symptoms include:

- 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

### This simple test will help you detect stroke symptoms and Act F.A.S.T.:

- F** = FACE Ask the person to smile. Does one side of the face droop?
- A** = ARM Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?
- S** = SPEECH Ask the person to repeat a simple sentence. Does the speech sound slurred or strange?
- T** = TIME If you observe any of these signs, it's time to call 9-1-1 or get to the nearest stroke center or hospital.

Everyone has some stroke risk. A few stroke risk factors are beyond your control, such as being over age 55, being a male, being an African-American, having diabetes, and having a family history of stroke. If you have one of these risk factors, it is even more important that you learn about the lifestyle and medical changes you can make to prevent a stroke.

### Medical stroke risk factors include:

Previous stroke, previous episode of transient ischemic attack (TIA) or mini stroke, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, heart disease, atrial fibrillation and carotid artery disease. These medical risk factors can be controlled. Talk with your doctor about what will work best for you.

### Lifestyle stroke risk factors include:

Smoking, being overweight and drinking too much alcohol. You can control these lifestyle risk factors by quitting smoking, exercising regularly, watching what and how much you eat and limiting alcohol consumption.

The above stroke prevention guidelines from the National Stroke Association above will help you learn how you may be able to lower your risk for a first stroke.

