

Strokes

STROKES

Each year, more than 500,000 Americans have a stroke. A stroke is sometimes called a "brain attack." A stroke happens when the brain does not get enough blood. This cuts off oxygen and kills brain cells.

Strokes can affect a person's ability to speak, see, move, and think. Strokes may even cause death. In fact, they are the third leading killer in the United States. And they are the leading cause of disability in adults.

There are three major types of stroke:

- **Thrombotic** (thrahm-bah-tik) — Thrombotic strokes are caused by fat deposits (plaques) that have built up in your arteries (blood vessels).
- **Embolic** (em-bah-lik) — Embolic strokes are caused by a blood clot in another part of the body.
- **Hemorrhagic** (hem-uh-ray-jik) — Hemorrhagic strokes are caused when an artery bleeds in the brain.

Who Gets Strokes?

- Most strokes happen to adults over the age of 40. But younger adults and even children can have them, too.
- About the same number of men and women have strokes. All groups and races are at risk for strokes. But African-Americans are almost two times as likely to die from a stroke as whites. And they often suffer more damage.

Lower Your Risk of Stroke

- **Control your blood pressure** — One out of three people with high blood pressure doesn't know it. That's a problem, because high blood pressure is the biggest risk factor for stroke. Get your blood pressure checked often.
- **Control your diabetes** — This disease can change the blood vessels in the brain, increasing your chance of stroke. Also, high blood-glucose levels at the time of a stroke usually lead to more brain damage than when the glucose level is normal. So it's important to follow your doctor's advice for controlling your diabetes.
- **Stop smoking** — Smoking can thicken your blood and cause dangerous clots. It can also raise your blood pressure. Ask your doctor, pharmacist or nurse about ways to quit.
- **Exercise regularly** — Exercise makes the heart stronger and improves blood flow. It also helps control weight. Being heavy increases your chance of diseases.
- **Watch for heart disease** — Sometimes heart disease makes blood clots. Make sure you visit your doctor regularly.

Act Fast!

Call 911 Right Away!
Always treat the warning signs of a stroke as an emergency. Getting help in less than three (3) hours will greatly improve your chances for recovery.

October 2003

Strokes (cont.)

- **See your doctor for stroke-like symptoms** — Don't ignore the signs of a "mini-stroke" (see below). They can place you at greater risk for a full-blown stroke later on. If you get any of the signs, see a doctor right away.

Warning Signs

Call 911 if you have any of the following warning signs

(or have someone else call right away):

- Your face, arm or leg gets weak or numb.
- You lose all or part of your sight in one eye or both.
- You have a hard time speaking and/or understanding other people.
- You get a very bad headache for no reason.
- You get dizzy or fall suddenly.

A lot of people ignore these signs because they often last only a few minutes. But these "mini-strokes" can be a warning of a full-blown stroke later. So get medical help right away.

After a Stroke

- Seventy percent (70%) of all stroke survivors aren't able to do the same job tasks as they were before. Thirty percent (30%) need help caring for themselves. Fortunately, people who have had a stroke can get back some or all of their abilities with speech and physical therapy.

FDA has approved several drugs to treat and even prevent stroke. Ask your doctor for more information. FDA's Office of Women's Health website: www.fda.gov/womens

To learn more...

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke Information Office

Phone: 301-496-5751

Web: www.ninds.nih.gov

National High Blood Pressure Education Program c/o NHLBI Information Center

Phone: 301-592-8573

The National Stroke Association

Phone: 1-800-STROKES/ 800-787-6537

Web: <http://www.stroke.org>