

Ask *the* Expert

Stroke Awareness and Prevention

The facts about stroke are staggering – someone suffers from a stroke every 40 seconds in the U.S., causing 1 out of every 17 deaths.

According to the Center for Disease Control, stroke ranks as the 4th leading cause of death in Arkansas.

If you or someone you know were experiencing the signs of a stroke would you recognize them? If you did, would you know what to do? Education is the key in lowering risk and the effects of stroke in our community.

While we cannot always prevent a stroke occurrence, knowing what to do when it happens can mean the difference between life and death.

What are the signs and symptoms of stroke?

The signs of a stroke are easily remembered with the acronym – FAST.

- **F – Face:** Look for facial droop or uneven smile
- **A – Arm:** Check if one arm is numb or weak
- **S – Speech:** Listen for slurred speech, difficulty speaking or understanding
- **T – Time:** Call 9-1-1 and get to the hospital immediately

The average time it takes from the onset of symptoms to arrival at an emergency department is 48-72 hours in Arkansas (the national average is 17-22 hours).

42% of people over 50 do not recognize signs and symptoms of stroke and 17% of people over 50 can't even name a single stroke symptom. Only 38% of people call 9-1-1 when experiencing a stroke and only 20-25% arrive to the emergency department within 3 hours – the window that is recommended for the best outcomes.

These statistics are staggering. A common myth about stroke is that there's nothing that can prevent an occurrence and it cannot be treated. Actually, 80% of strokes are preventable and all strokes require emergency treatment.

What are risk factors for stroke?

Anyone can have a stroke, but there are key factors that may put a particular person at a higher risk. Women are at a higher risk of stroke than men. In fact, stroke kills more than twice as many American women every year as breast cancer.

The incidence of stroke is also higher in African Americans and Hispanics. Other factors that contribute to stroke prevalence include obesity, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, smoking (doubles risk) and diabetes.

What is a stroke?

A stroke occurs when a blood clot blocks a blood vessel or artery, interrupting the blood flow to the brain. This can also happen when a blood vessel breaks. A stroke kills brain cells in the area of the brain where the clot or breakage occurred.

There are two types of strokes: ischemic and hemorrhagic. Ischemic strokes are most common, accounting for about 87% of strokes. An ischemic stroke can be embolic – the clot travels to the brain from another part of the body, or thrombotic – a clot develops in an artery. Although hemorrhagic strokes are less common, they are often more deadly. They occur when a blood vessel in the brain breaks or ruptures.

What are the lasting effects of stroke?

Stroke is the leading cause of disability in adults.

Generally, approximately 25% recover with minor disabilities, 40% experience moderate to severe disabilities that require special care, and 10% require care at either a skilled-care or long-term care facility. 15% of stroke victims die shortly after the stroke.

Immediate response is crucial in the treatment of stroke because every minute truly matters. From the moment symptoms become noticeable to the time that treatment is received, brain cells continue to die.

How does NEA Baptist treat patients experiencing a stroke?

NEA Baptist is now offering patients experiencing a stroke 24/7 access to board certified vascular neurologists through a tele-medicine partnership with AR Saves, a stroke treatment program offered by University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences.

The partnership uses telecommunications technology to connect specially trained neurologists in Little Rock to the emergency room doctors at NEA Baptist through live two-way video to aid in medical diagnosis and patient care. The partnership is based on research that shows early treatment is the best way to treat stroke. The 24/7 access to specialists allows NEA Baptist to treat patients faster, resulting in better outcomes.

The course of treatment is usually IV t-PA, the only FDA approved acute stroke therapy when given within 3 hours of on-set.

The best method of stroke prevention is to reduce risk of stroke, to recognize the symptoms and to respond quickly by calling 9-1-1.

Remember that 80% of strokes are preventable. Know the signs of a stroke and remember to act FAST.

If you believe that you or someone you know may be having a stroke, please call 9-1-1 and ask to be treated at NEA Baptist.



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