

WVU Medicine Uniontown Hospital Stroke Center presents “What You Need To Know About Stroke”

Each year May is recognized as National Stroke Awareness Month. As the 5th leading cause of death and disability in the United States, it is vitally important to understand what stroke is, how to identify it, and what to do if you or a loved one is showing stroke symptoms.

What is a stroke?

A stroke is brain tissue that dies because oxygen and other nutrients cannot get to the brain. Most commonly, this is caused by clogged blood vessels, but can also result from a blood vessel burst. An MRI is used to confirm a stroke at the affected brain tissue is visible through the scan.

What is a “mini stroke”?

A Transient Ischemic Attack (TIA) is commonly referred to as a “mini stroke”. These events are also caused by a blockage in the vessel and can be accompanied by temporary stroke-like symptoms that resolve without medical intervention. It is important to note that a “mini stroke” is not the same thing as a small stroke as they do not cause any brain tissue to die.

Even if stroke-like symptoms resolve, it is important for a person to seek medical attention by coming to the Emergency Department as approximately 1/3 of people who have a TIA go on to have a stroke within one year. Our Stroke Center and care team can work with the patient to identify ways to reduce chances of having a stroke after the TIA.

How to recognize stroke?

Stroke symptoms come on suddenly. An easy way to remember stroke symptoms is with the acronym FAST.

F stands for facial droop. Ask the person to smile and see if one side of the face is weak.

A stands for arm weakness. This will occur on one side of the body. It is a myth that only the left-sided can be affected by a stroke; it can be either the left or the right side depending on what side of the brain is affected.

S stands for speech. If a person suddenly is slurring their words or is not making any sense, it could be a stroke.

T stands for time. It is time to call 9-1-1 if you recognize any of these symptoms

What to do if someone is showing symptoms of a stroke?

Call 9-1-1 immediately. It is important to act quickly if a person is showing any symptoms of stroke because the typical patient loses 1.9 million brain cells each minute in which stroke is untreated. It is better to overreact and be discharged safely from the Emergency Department than to allow stroke to go untreated with irreversible damage or death.

What causes a person to have a stroke?

Some things that cause stroke are unavoidable, like family history of stroke, but many risk factors can be controlled. Some common risk factors are high cholesterol, high blood pressure, smoking, and diabetes. Each of these can cause plaque to build up in blood vessels over time. High blood pressure can also weaken the vessel walls potentially leading to vessel bursts and bleeding.

What can I do to lower my chances of having a stroke?

Attend regular check-ups with your doctor to identify your personal risk factors for stroke and follow any care plan your doctor gives you. This may include taking medications and/or lifestyle changes including to stop smoking, increasing physical activity, and eating a healthy diet.

Where can I go for stroke care?

In the event of a stroke, call 9-1-1 immediately and emergency responders will get you to the help quickly. If you or a loved one are brought to our facility, you can trust that expert care will be received. WVU Medicine Uniontown Hospital is a certified Primary Stroke Center and has earned the Joint Commission's Gold Plus Seal of Approval for Advanced Certification as a Primary Stroke Center. We are dedicated to providing excellent stroke care to our community.



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