

Elder Health & Lifestyle

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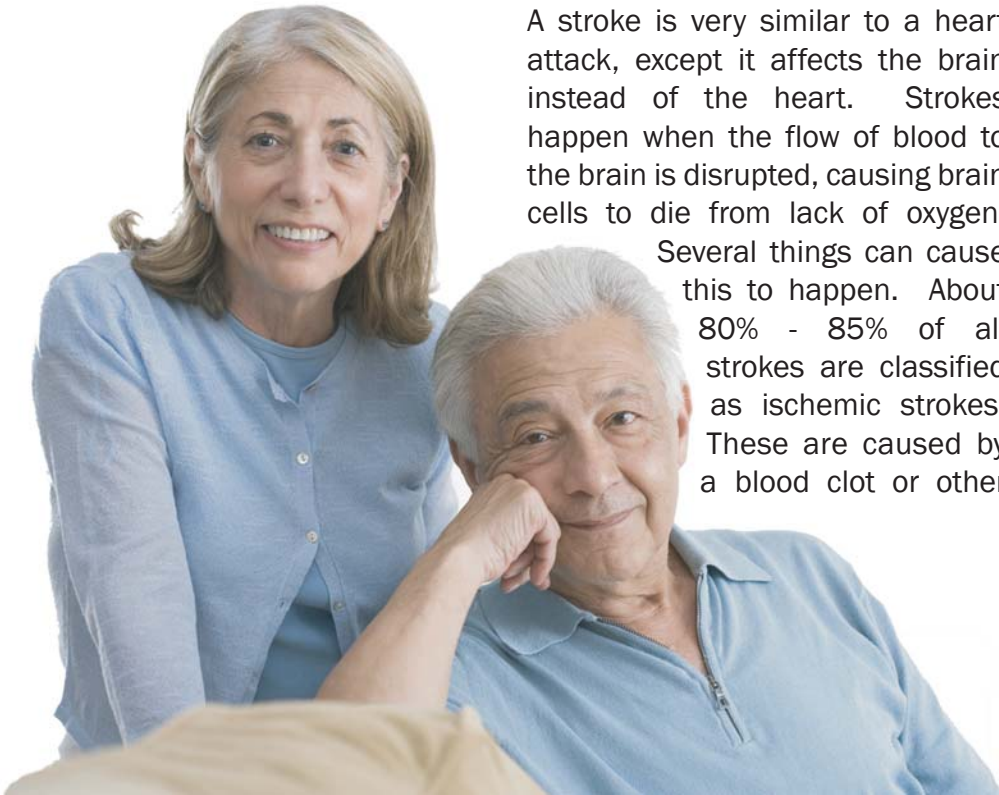
What Is a Stroke?

A stroke is very similar to a heart attack, except it affects the brain instead of the heart. Strokes happen when the flow of blood to the brain is disrupted, causing brain cells to die from lack of oxygen.

Several things can cause this to happen. About 80% - 85% of all strokes are classified as ischemic strokes. These are caused by a blood clot or other

blockage in a blood vessel that can slow or even stop the flow of blood to the brain. Hemorrhagic strokes are less common, but are responsible for many deaths. These occur when a blood vessel in the brain bursts, causing a hemorrhage.

When the brain does not get the oxygen that it needs to function, the cells begin to die very rapidly. This causes damage to the brain that can affect memory, speech, movement and even cause death. If you ever believe that you or someone you are with is having a stroke, call 911 or get to a hospital as soon as possible. The longer you wait to get treatment, the more damage the brain will receive. Every second counts!



Risk & Prevention

Just like any other cardiovascular disease, some risks of having a stroke are out of our control. Things like age, gender, race and family history are just natural. Use the checklist to the right to determine your level of risk and learn what you can do to help prevent a stroke.

	YES	NO
<i>Are you over the age of 55?</i>		
<i>Are you male?</i>		
<i>Are you of African-American, Hispanic, or Asian/Pacific Islander descent?</i>		
<i>Is there a history of stroke or heart attack in your family?</i>		
<i>Are you diabetic?</i>		
<i>Do you suffer from heart or artery disease?</i>		
<i>Do you smoke tobacco?</i>		
<i>Are you overweight?</i>		
<i>Do you have high cholesterol?</i>		
<i>Do you have high blood pressure?</i>		

**Each check in the "yes" column indicates an increased risk*





Prevention Methods

Even though there are some risk factors that we cannot control, there are also many ways to help prevent a stroke. Eating a well-balanced diet that is low in saturated fat and sodium is one way to reduce your risk for stroke, as well as many other health problems. Improving your circulation is another thing you can do. The best way to do this is to exercise, even if it's just taking a 30 minute walk around your neighborhood each day.

Of course, the best thing you can do is talk to your doctor. He or she can better monitor your health and help you make the right choices based on your individual situation.

How to Recognize a Stroke

The symptoms of a stroke often appear suddenly. If you or anyone around you ever shows any symptoms of having a stroke, call 911 or get to a hospital immediately! Remember, the longer you wait, the more damage the brain sustains.

Common stroke symptoms include the following:

- difficulty seeing in one or both eyes
- dizziness, loss of coordination, loss of balance or difficulty walking
- weakness or numbness of face or limbs, especially on one side of the body
- difficulty speaking; inability to understand things that are going on
- a severe headache that comes on suddenly and with no apparent cause



***Information for this Elder Health and Lifestyle Bulletin was collected from the National Stroke Association (www.stroke.org) and the American Stroke Association (www.strokeassociation.org)*

Act F.A.S.T.

If you think someone around you is having a stroke, you can use this simple test.

F.	<i>face</i>	<i>When you ask the person to smile, does one side of their face droop down?</i>
A.	<i>arms</i>	<i>When the person raises both arms, does one arm drift down?</i>
S.	<i>speech</i>	<i>Is the person's speech slurred? Can he or she repeat a simple sentence?</i>
T.	<i>time</i>	<i>Time is important! Call 911 immediately!</i>

