

### **Introduction**

You could save your life or the life of a loved one by learning the symptoms of a stroke and acting F.A.S.T. when they happen.

This reference summary will help you know more about strokes, including warning signs. It discusses risk factors, medication, and following up with your physician.

### **F.A.S.T.—Warning Signs of a Stroke**

Use the F.A.S.T. method to recognize and respond to stroke symptoms.

“F” stands for face. Ask the person to smile. A stroke would cause a smile that is uneven or a droopy face. Call 9-1-1 immediately if you notice these symptoms.

“A” stands for arm. Ask the person to raise both arms. A stroke would cause one arm to drift down. One arm may not even be able to be raised. Call 9-1-1 immediately if you notice these symptoms.

“S” stands for speech. Ask the person to say a simple phrase. A stroke would cause the person’s speech to be slurred. The person also may not be able to respond. Call 9-1-1 immediately if you notice these symptoms.

“T” stands for time. Every minute counts during a stroke. Call 9-1-1 immediately and get to the hospital.



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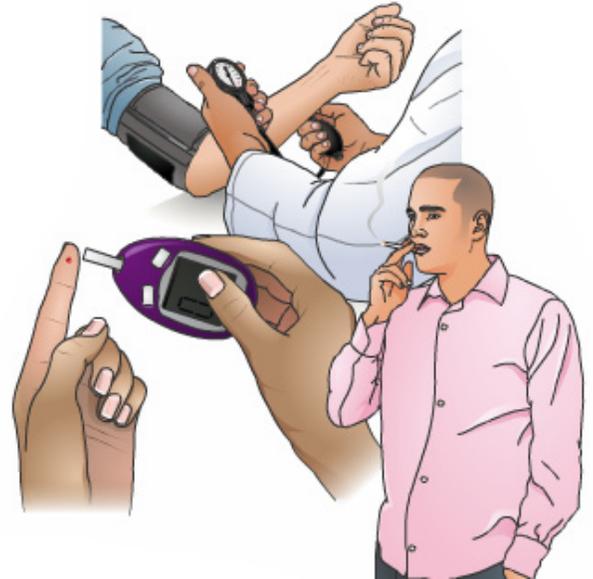
This document is for informational purposes and is not intended to be a substitute for the advice of a doctor or healthcare professional or a recommendation for any particular treatment plan. Like any printed material, it may become out of date over time. It is important that you rely on the advice of a doctor or a healthcare professional for your specific condition.

## My Personal Risk Factors

The risk factors for stroke are different for each person and may include:

- High blood pressure
- Obesity
- High cholesterol
- Heart problems
- Diabetes
- Smoking
- Inactive lifestyle

Cholesterol is a fat-like substance. Too much cholesterol in the blood may build up in blood vessels, block blood flow to tissues and organs, and increase the risk of heart disease and stroke. Diabetes is a disease in which the body does not control the amount of glucose, or sugar, in the blood.



Other risk factors may include:

- Previous stroke
- Previous or current TIA
- Heart disease
- Carotid artery disease
- Drinking too much alcohol
- Certain disorders that affect the blood

TIA is transient ischemic attack. It produces stroke-like symptoms that last for a short time. It does not usually do lasting damage. But if you have a TIA, your risk of stroke goes up. The carotid artery is a major artery that carries blood from the heart to the head. If a carotid artery becomes blocked or narrows, it is known as carotid artery disease.

Your healthcare provider can give you information about how to manage these risk factors. Some risk factors may even be eliminated, such as smoking and drinking too much alcohol.

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## Taking Medication

Your health care provider may prescribe medications to help reduce your risk of stroke. Medications can help you manage:

- High blood pressure
- Cholesterol levels
- Diabetes
- Heart problems
- Clotting disorders

Some medications should not be taken with other over the counter drugs, supplements and herbal remedies. Check with your health care provider before taking any supplements or medicines.

Medications are an important part of treatment after a stroke. Make sure you talk to your pharmacist or healthcare provider about the correct way to take your medication. Most medications need to be taken every day even when you are feeling fine.

Make sure you take all your medications. Having a routine may help. For example, you may be able to take your medication at breakfast time every day. It may also help to keep a pill box that has days of the week compartments.

Never stop taking medication or change your dosage without first talking to your healthcare provider. Also tell your healthcare provider about any side effects you experience while taking your medications.

## Dial, Don't Drive

If you have already experienced a stroke or a TIA, you are at risk for having another one. Make sure you are able to recognize the signs of a stroke. Know the F.A.S.T. method. Call 9-1-1 if you think you may be having a stroke. Never drive yourself to a hospital if you think you are having a stroke. If you can't call 9-1-1, have someone else call or drive you to the nearest hospital.



## Permanent Plan—Physician Follow-up after Discharge

Life after a stroke includes frequent follow-up visits with your healthcare provider. Your healthcare provider will help you make a permanent treatment plan.

Talk to your healthcare provider if you have trouble following the plan. Sometimes people face hurdles such as the cost of medications and depression that make it hard to stick to the plan. Remember, your healthcare provider wants to help you. He or she can help work out a solution with you.

### Summary

You could save your life or the life of a loved one by learning the symptoms of a stroke and acting F.A.S.T. when they happen. F.A.S.T. stands for face, arm, speech, and time. This is an important method to recognize and respond to stroke symptoms.

The risk factors for stroke are different for each person. Talk to your healthcare provider about your stroke risk and ways you can reduce your risk. Also talk to your pharmacist or healthcare provider about the correct way to take your medication.

If you think you are having a stroke, dial 9-1-1 immediately. Never drive yourself. If you can't call 9-1-1, then have someone else call or take you to the nearest hospital.



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