

# PREVENT

## How can strokes be prevented?

While genetics play a big role in a person's risk of stroke, the following prevention guidelines provided by the National Stroke Association can help control many risk factors and help prevent up to 80 percent of strokes.

**Know blood pressure:** High blood pressure (hypertension) is a major stroke risk factor if left untreated. Have blood pressure checked yearly by a doctor or at health fairs, a local pharmacy or supermarket or with an automatic blood pressure machine.

**Identify atrial fibrillation (Afib):** Afib is an abnormal heartbeat that can increase stroke risk by 500 percent. Afib can cause blood to pool in the heart and may form a clot and cause a stroke. A doctor must diagnose and treat Afib.

**Stop smoking:** Smoking doubles the risk of stroke. It damages blood vessel walls, speeds up artery clogging, raises blood pressure and makes the heart work harder. Stopping smoking today will immediately begin to decrease risk.

**Control alcohol use:** Alcohol use has been linked to stroke in many studies. Most doctors recommend not drinking or drinking only in moderation – no more than two drinks each day. Remember that alcohol can negatively interact with other drugs you are taking.

**Know cholesterol levels:** Cholesterol is a fatty substance in blood that is made by the body. It also comes in food. High cholesterol levels can clog arteries and cause a stroke. See a doctor if your total cholesterol level is more than 200.

**Control diabetes:** Many people with diabetes have health problems that are also stroke risk factors. Your doctor can prescribe a nutrition program, lifestyle changes and medicine to help control your diabetes.

**Manage exercise and diet:** Excess weight strains the circulatory system. Exercise five times a week. Maintain a diet low in calories, salt, saturated and trans fats and cholesterol. Eat five servings of fruits and vegetables daily.

**Treat circulation problems:** Fatty deposits can block arteries carrying blood to the brain and lead to a stroke. Other problems such as sickle cell disease or severe anemia should be treated.

**Act FAST at the first warning sign of stroke:** If you have any stroke symptoms, call 911.

# stroke in Louisiana

Louisiana has the **5<sup>th</sup> highest death rate** from cardiovascular disease in the country. Stroke is the **no. 4 killer** in Louisiana. In 2010, **1,977 Louisianans died** of stroke.

*It's time to*  
understand, recognize & prevent.



Right Place. Right Time. Right Care.

# UNDERSTAND

## What is a stroke?

Stroke is a brain attack, a medical emergency that cuts off vital blood flow and oxygen to the brain. This interruption of blood flow causes two million brain cells to die every minute during stroke, increasing risk of permanent brain damage, disability or death.

There are two types of stroke:

**Ischemic stroke** occurs when arteries are blocked by blood clots or by the gradual build-up of plaque and other fatty deposits. About 87 percent of all strokes are ischemic.

**Hemorrhagic stroke** occurs when a blood vessel in the brain breaks leaking blood into the brain. Hemorrhagic strokes account for 13 percent of all strokes, yet are responsible for more than 30 percent of all stroke deaths.

## Who's at risk?

Stroke can happen to anyone at any time, regardless of race, sex or age but certain uncontrollable factors increase the risk of stroke. These factors include:

**Age:** After age 55, stroke risk doubles for every decade a person is alive.

**Gender:** Approximately 55,000 more women than men have a stroke each year. Women are twice as likely to die from stroke as from breast cancer.

**Race:** African Americans have almost twice the risk of first-ever stroke compared with Caucasians.

**History of Stroke or Ischemic Attack:** Within five years of a stroke, one out of every five or 24 percent of women and 42 percent of men will experience a secondary stroke. Secondary strokes often have a higher rate of death and disability because parts of the brain already injured by the original stroke may not be as resilient. The prevalence of transient ischemic attacks (TIA – “mini strokes”) increases with age. Up to 40 percent of all people who suffer a TIA will go on to experience a stroke.

# RECOGNIZE

## What are the symptoms of a stroke?

During a stroke one or more of the following symptoms are usually present, often times with a sudden onset.

- ❑ Numbness or weakness, particularly on one side of the body
- ❑ Confusion or trouble understanding others
- ❑ Trouble speaking
- ❑ Vision or perception problems with one or both eyes
- ❑ Trouble moving or walking
- ❑ Trouble staying balanced or coordinated.
- ❑ Dizziness
- ❑ Severe headache with no known cause

## If you suspect a stroke, remember to act **FAST!**

### FACE



Ask the person to smile. Does one side of the face droop?

### ARMS



Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?

### SPEECH



Ask the person to repeat a simple sentence. Does the speech sound slurred or strange?

### TIME



If you observe any of these signs (independently or together), call 911 immediately.