

RECOGNIZING A STROKE

Ask the person to

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| S mile | NOT lopsided |
| T alk | Speak a simple sentence coherently |
| T ongue | Stick out — NOT crooked or to one side |
| R aise | Both arms |

If the person is unable to do ANY of these things: **IMMEDIATELY call 911 and describe symptoms to the dispatcher**

Each year, about 795,000 Americans have a stroke and about 130,000 die. Some are caused by bleeding in the brain, but the vast majority is caused by a clot that blocks blood flow, starving brain cells. The drug TPA can dissolve those clots and reduce disability but only if it's given within three to four hours of the first symptoms, and the sooner the better. Yet only about 5 percent of patients receive it, in part because many stroke sufferers don't get to the hospital in time for testing to tell if they're a candidate. AP March 23, 2014

CAUTION: You should **NOT** give someone who is on warfarin an aspirin if you think they are having a stroke! People on warfarin have a higher risk of a hemorrhagic stroke (bleeding into the brain), and aspirin will make this worse. You should try to keep the person as comfortable as possible until the ambulance arrives. If they're more comfortable sitting, let them sit, as long as they're supervised, and as long as they can sit on their own without falling over. If they feel wobbly while sitting, it is best to lay them down. What you **DON'T** want to do is get them upset with you if they insist on sitting and you want them to lie down.

Anyone with symptoms of stroke should be taken to the hospital immediately. Clot-busting drugs that can reverse the damage of stroke can only be administered within a certain amount of time, so any delay can prove costly. **IF you suspect stroke**, call emergency services or a doctor immediately. Support the person and do not leave them alone. It's best to leave them seated or semi-reclined, not flat. Support the airway, and prompt them to keep alert. Do not administer medications unless they are specifically directed for this purpose. Record the time you first saw signs of the stroke.

Many symptoms are the same for both women and men. These include:

- Facial droop or uneven smile
- Weakness that involves the arm and leg on the same side of the body
- Slurred speech or difficulty speaking or understanding

If you experience any of these symptoms, don't delay. Call 911 immediately.

Women might assume they have indigestion and delay seeking medical attention. This can have serious consequences. Only within the first three hours after the onset of stroke is emergency treatment with clot-busting drugs a viable option. Women often miss this window because they don't know what early warning signs to watch for. The signs of stroke in women include:

- Hiccups
- Dizziness
- Chest pain
- Headache
- Body numbness, with one side being more numb than the other