



## May is Stroke Awareness Month

### What is Stroke?

Each year in the United States, there are more than 780,000 strokes. A stroke occurs when a blood vessel that carries oxygen and nutrients to the brain is either blocked by a clot or bursts. When part of the brain cannot get the blood (and oxygen) it needs to control the rest of the body, the brain cells in the immediate area start to die. There are two main types of stroke:

- **Ischemic stroke:** the vessel clogs within (85% of all strokes);
- **Hemorrhagic stroke:** the vessel ruptures, causing blood to leak into the brain.

### What can you do to prevent a stroke?

Stroke prevention is still the best medicine. The most important treatable conditions linked to stroke are:

- **High blood pressure.** Treat it. Eat a balanced diet, maintain a healthy weight, and exercise to reduce blood pressure. Drugs are also available to help manage high blood pressure.
- **Cigarette smoking.** Quit. Medical help is available to help quit.
- **Heart disease.** Manage it. Your doctor can treat your heart disease, and may prescribe medication to help prevent the formation of clots.
- **Diabetes.** Control it. Treatment can delay complications that increase the risk of stroke.
- **Transient ischemic attacks (TIAs).** Seek help. TIAs are small strokes that last only for a few minutes or hours. They should never be ignored and can be treated with drugs or surgery.

### Learn to Recognize the Signs

Knowing the warning signs of stroke, and teaching them to others, can save lives. The most common signs include:

- Sudden **numbness** or weakness of the face, arm, or leg, especially on one side of the body,
- Sudden **confusion**, trouble speaking or understanding,
- Sudden **trouble seeing** in one or both eyes,
- Sudden **trouble walking**, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination,
- Sudden, **severe headache** with no known cause.

If you, or someone with you, has one or more of these signs, immediately call 9-1-1. It is very important to take immediate action. Also, **check the time** as this will help the rescue team deliver the appropriate course of treatment. If given within three hours of the start of symptoms, a clot-busting drug called tissue plasminogen activator (tPA) can reduce long-term disability for the most common type of stroke.

### What disabilities can result from a stroke?

Although stroke is a disease of the brain, it can affect the entire body. The effects of a stroke range from mild to severe. Disabilities may include pain, numbness, or paralysis, problems with thinking, problems with speaking, and emotional problems. For additional information, visit the National Institutes of Health at <http://www.nih.gov>.