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KNOW STROKE

KNOW THE SIGNS. ACT IN TIME.

# What You Need to Know About Stroke

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# KNOW STROKE

**Each year in the United States, there are more than 700,000 strokes. Stroke is the third leading cause of death in the country. And stroke causes more serious long-term disabilities than any other disease. Nearly three-quarters of all strokes occur in people over the age of 65 and the risk of having a stroke more than doubles each decade after the age of 55.**

**For African Americans, stroke is more common and more deadly — even in young and middle-aged adults — than for any ethnic or other racial group in the United States.**

**Learning about stroke can help you act in time to save a co-worker, friend, or relative. And making changes in your lifestyle can help you prevent stroke.**

## Why is Stroke an Emergency?

### What is a stroke?

A stroke is serious – just like a heart attack. A stroke is sometimes called a "brain attack." Most often, stroke occurs when blood flow to the brain stops because it is blocked by a clot. The brain cells in the immediate area begin to die because they stop getting the oxygen and nutrients they need to function.

### What causes a stroke?

There are two kinds of stroke. The most common kind of stroke, called **ischemic stroke**, is caused by a blood clot that blocks or plugs a blood vessel in the brain. The other kind of stroke, called **hemorrhagic stroke**, is caused by a blood vessel that breaks and bleeds into the brain.

### What disabilities can result from a stroke?

Stroke damage in the brain can affect the entire body – resulting in mild to severe disabilities. These include paralysis, problems with thinking, problems with speaking, and emotional problems.

**New treatments are available that greatly reduce the damage caused by a stroke. But you need to arrive at the hospital within 60 minutes after symptoms start to prevent disability. Knowing stroke symptoms, calling 911 immediately, and getting to a hospital are critical.**

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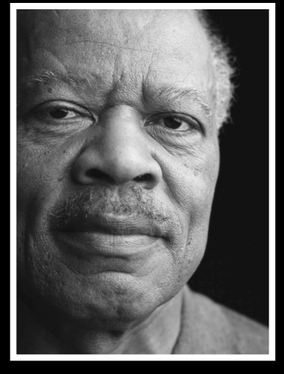
# Know the Signs. Act in Time.

**Stroke Symptoms:**

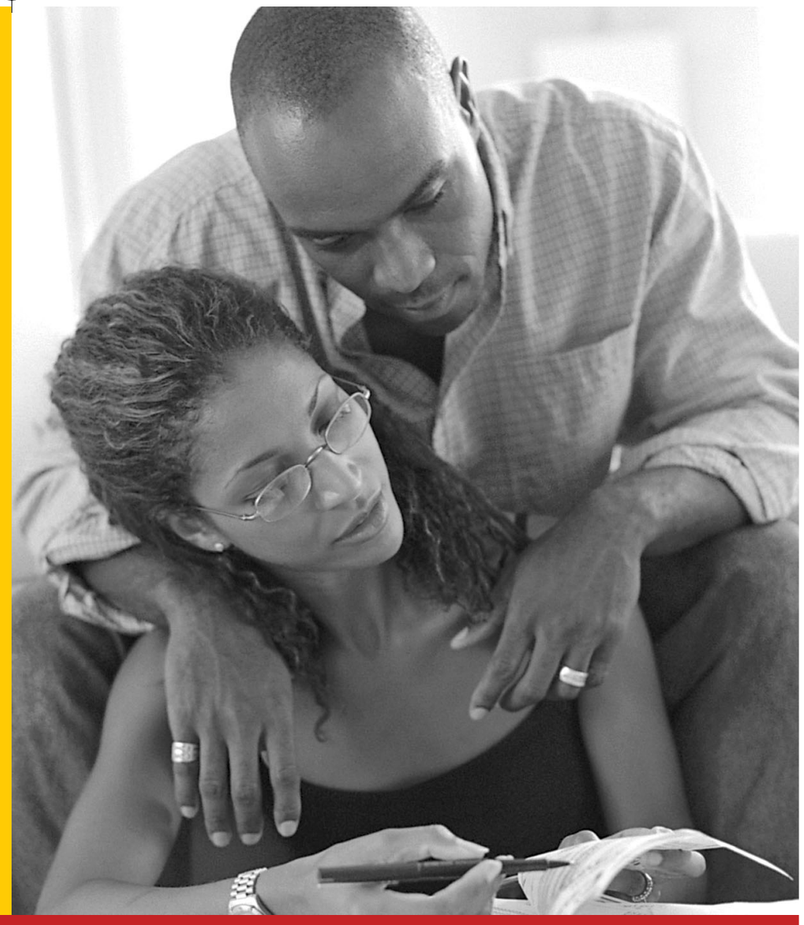
- **Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm, or leg (especially on one side of the body)**
- **Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding speech**
- **Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes**
- **Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination**
- **Sudden severe headache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



## What should you do?

Because stroke injures the brain, you may not realize that you are having a stroke. The people around you might not know it either. Your family, friends, or neighbors may think you are confused. You may not be able to **call 911** on your own. That's why everyone should know the signs of stroke – and know how to act fast.

Don't wait for the symptoms to improve or worsen. If you believe you are having a stroke – or someone you know is having a stroke – **call 911** immediately. Making the decision to call for medical help can make the difference in avoiding a lifelong disability.



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# A 911 Call Saved My Life.

*When I walked into the locker room at work, I realized something was wrong. I couldn't speak. I tried to pick up my lock, but my right hand couldn't grab it. One of my co-workers noticed something was wrong and asked if I could write. With my left hand, I scribbled **911** on a piece of paper. Luckily, my friend knew the signs of stroke and got help. She called an ambulance, and I was rushed to the emergency room. The doctors ran some tests and put a drug into my IV. Within 10 minutes I could speak again.*

*I didn't know a thing about stroke before I had one. Now, I make sure that all my family knows the signs of stroke so they can get help if they need it.*

**Ruth Junious**
*Stroke Survivor*

## CALL 911

**If you believe you are having a stroke — or someone you know is having a stroke — call 911 immediately.**

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# Know Stroke Prevention

**Conditions that can cause stroke are very common among African Americans. The best treatment for stroke is prevention. You can reduce your risk of having a stroke by taking action to improve your health.**

## What can you do to prevent a stroke?

While family history of stroke plays a role in your risk, there are many risk factors you can control.

- If you have high blood pressure, work with your doctor to get it under control. Many people do not realize they have high blood pressure, which usually produces no symptoms but is a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke. Managing your high blood pressure is the most important thing you can do to avoid stroke.
- If you smoke, quit.
- If you have diabetes, learn how to manage it. As with high blood pressure, diabetes usually causes no symptoms but it increases the chance of stroke.
- If you are overweight, start maintaining a healthy diet and exercising regularly.

## WHY IS STROKE TREATMENT URGENT?

**Every minute counts. The longer blood flow is cut off to the brain, the greater the damage. The most common kind of stroke, ischemic stroke, can be treated with a drug that dissolves clots blocking the blood flow. The window of opportunity to start treating stroke patients is three hours. But a person needs to be at the hospital within 60 minutes of having a stroke to be evaluated and receive treatment.**

## Where Can You Learn More About Stroke?

**Talk to your doctor about your personal risk factors for having a stroke. For more information about stroke prevention and treatment, call the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke at 1-800-352-9424.**

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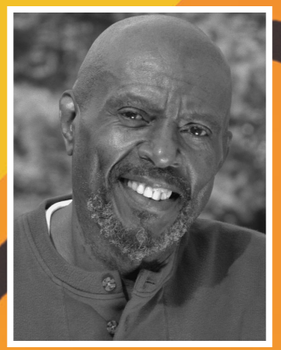
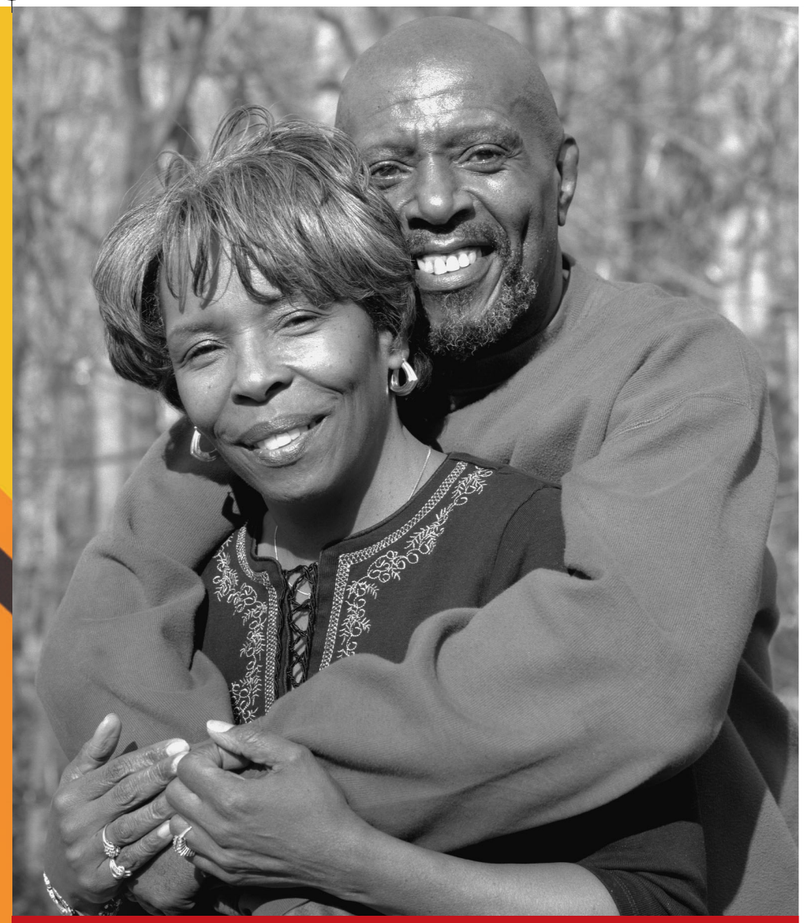


# I Hope People Realize They Can Prevent Stroke.

*I had a stroke when I was 49 years old. I am 67 now and have gone almost 20 years without another stroke. Until I had my stroke, I didn't do anything good for my health. I had high blood pressure, I was overweight, and I smoked. When bad things happen to people, they tend to think "why me?" But, when I think about my stroke, I think "why not me?" I had all the risk factors and wasn't taking care of myself like I am now. I've learned a lot of important lessons from my stroke, which have caused me to change my eating habits, quit smoking, and really control my high blood pressure for the first time in my life. I hope people realize they can prevent stroke. It doesn't have to happen to them.*

**Ted Turner**
*Stroke Survivor*



## STROKE PREVENTION

- Manage your diabetes
- Control your high blood pressure
- Don’t smoke
- Eat right
- Exercise

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www.ninds.nih.gov

1-800-352-9424

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