

# Think Fast!

— By Betty Tryon, R.N.

The month of May is designated for stroke awareness. It is a great time to focus on another aspect of your health. Throughout the month, various agencies, groups and medical personnel will endeavor to influence your awareness of the danger of having a stroke and inform you on how to recognize if you or someone else is having a stroke. Information will be available about how to become involved in your community and pass the word on to others.

There exist ample reasons why increased knowledge about strokes is important. As the third-leading cause of death and the number one reason for disability, the numbers are disturbing enough to warrant concern. A brief look at the breakdown of the numbers is even more alarming. More women die from stroke than breast cancer. African-Americans have double the risk of having a stroke than do Caucasians. Also, compared with Caucasians, the strokes suffered by African-Americans tend to be far more disabling.

Strokes are so dangerous due to what occurs when a stroke takes place. When a blood vessel to the brain becomes damaged for any reason, and blood flow is disrupted, cells in

that area of the brain start to die and brain damage results. Whatever area of the brain is affected, those abilities will be severely compromised or lost. The earlier treatment is received for a stroke, the better. If medication is received within a three-hour window, you can diminish damage to those areas of the brain affected and improve chances for survival. One of the slogans used by the National Stroke Association to help educate the public is Act F.A.S.T., which stands for face, arms, speech and time. If a stroke is suspected, take a close look and determine if one side of the face is drooping. Determine if there is any weakness in the arms. Is speech difficult; is there any slurring of the words? Time is crucial.

If any of these symptoms are present, call 9-1-1.

Because the effects of having a stroke are so debilitating, and an option is available for diminishing many of those effects, it is critical for the public to have the correct information, hence, the reason for May being Stroke Awareness Month. You might notice bulletin boards in schools and health care facilities all raising the awareness of strokes.

Eighty percent of all strokes are preventable. Watching your diet, cholesterol and weight are a few steps you can take to avoid a stroke. Take advantage of this month to increase your knowledge and your chances of surviving a stroke. **NOW**



*This article is for general information only and does not constitute medical advice. Consult with your physician for questions regarding this topic.*



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