



HOUSING & COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

OFFICE ON AGING

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The S.T.R. in Stroke Could Save Your Life

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A stroke can happen without a person knowing one is occurring. Each year about 700,000 Americans suffer from a stroke. A stroke occurs when a blood clot blocks a blood vessel in the brain or an artery bleeds in or around the brain. So what can a person do to avoid being a statistic? Celebrate **American Stroke Month** this May by learning and practicing important preventive steps to lower your chances of having a stroke. This is especially important for older adults since the risk of stroke increases as a person ages.

What are things a person can do to decrease stroke chances?

- Control high blood pressure. Have your blood pressure checked routinely so that you can make appropriate lifestyle changes.
- Manage diabetes. Diabetes can weaken the brain's blood vessels and cause a stroke.
- Eat a low-salt diet high in fruits and vegetables. This will help lower blood pressure.
- Be physically active on most days of the week. Physical activity improves heart function and improves blood flow. It also helps to maintain weight.
- Stop smoking. Research has shown that smoking causes blood clots.

The symptoms of a stroke can be **very subtle**, so it is important to know how to recognize if you or a loved one is having a stroke. Treatment within the first three hours is key to an effective recovery.

CALL 911 immediately if you have any of these symptoms:

- Sudden numbness in the face, arms, or legs, especially on one side of the body
- Vision loss
- Trouble speaking and/or understanding what others are saying
- Severe headache with no known reason
- Dizziness and/or loss of balance and coordination

There is a quick assessment that may be helpful to do. If a stroke is suspected, remember these three letters: STR (the first three letters of stroke).

S: Ask the person to **smile**

T: Ask the person to **talk** and speak a simple sentence

R: Ask the person to **raise** both arms

If the person has problems with any of these instructions, it could be indicative of a stroke. This information will also be helpful to emergency personnel when they arrive on the scene.

The Office on Aging Information Specialists can provide resources to help lower stroke risk. Call 1-800-510-2020 or 1-714-567-7500

Sources: www.fda.gov/womens: Stroke
www.strokeassociation.org



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