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Emergency Medical Service

fastFACTS

about Sedgwick County Government

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SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF STROKE

According to the American Stroke Foundation, stroke is the number one cause of adult disability and the third leading cause of death in the US. Sedgwick County EMS encourages older adults and caregivers to know the signs of a stroke and how to react to help limit the severity their effects.

What is a stroke?

Stroke is sometimes referred to as a brain attack because it impacts the brain in much the same way a heart attack impacts the heart. Every stroke is different and is largely dependent upon the area of the brain effected and the length of time that area was without oxygen.

There are two types of strokes. Transient Ischemic Attack, or TIA, is when a blood clot clogs an artery for a short period of time. This is sometimes called a warning stroke. The symptoms are much like a major stroke, however, they last for a shorter period of time. A hemorrhagic stroke is when a blood vessel ruptures and bleeds deep in the brain or on the surface of the brain.

What are the effects of stroke?

- Motor impairment and loss of sensation
- Difficulty with speech
- Changes in vision
- Loss of emotional control and changes in mood
- Cognitive deficits
- Problems with memory, judgment and problem solving

Who is at risk?

Although stroke affects people of all ages, genders and races, people over 55, males and African-Americans are at higher risk for stroke.

What are the risk factors?

There are, of course, risk factors that cannot be controlled, such as increasing age, male sex, race and family history of stroke. But, there are other risk factors that can be controlled, such as high blood pressure, diabetes, cigarette smoking, high blood cholesterol, obesity, and heart disease.

What are the warning signs?

- Suddenly feeling weak in an arm, hand or leg
- Cannot feel one side of your face or body
- Suddenly cannot see out of one or both eyes
- Suddenly have a hard time walking
- Cannot understand what someone is saying
- Feeling dizzy or losing your balance
- Having the worst headache you have ever had

What is the stroke test?

If you think someone is having a stroke, remember the 60 second test:

1. Ask the individual to smile.
2. Ask him or her to raise both arms.
3. Ask the person to repeat a simple sentence, like "It is sunny out today."

What to do in case of stroke:

Not all the warning signs occur in every stroke. Don't ignore signs of stroke, even if they go away!

In some instances a clot-busting drug can be administered to diminish the effects of a stroke. However, there is only a three-hour window when this drug can be administered. If you suspect someone is having a stroke, call 911 immediately, even if the individual protests! Time is brain function.

Reduce your risk of stroke.

- Get annual physicals
- Maintain a healthy diet
- Be aware of your family history
- Maintain a healthy weight for your body type
- Quit smoking
- Exercise
- Get regular blood pressure and cholesterol checks
- If you are diabetic, manage your blood sugar levels
- Take your medications accordingly

Source: American Stroke Foundation and Sedgwick County EMS