

STROKE AWARENESS

Start
Treating
Risks
Omitting
Killing
Effects

In 2013, Bristol Fire/Rescue responded to 3,810 emergency medical calls, including 43 responses to patients who exhibiting signs and symptoms of a stroke or a transient ischemic attack (TIA). Stroke is the third leading cause of death in America and the number one cause of adult disability. Bristol Fire/Rescue encourages everyone to think of stroke as “Start Treating Risks and Omitting Killing Effects”, and transient ischemic attack (TIA) as “Take Immediate Action”.

A stroke or “brain attack” occurs when a blood clot blocks an artery (a blood vessel that carries blood from the heart to the body) or a blood vessel (a tube through which the blood moves through the body) breaks, interrupting blood flow to an area of the brain. When either of these situations occurs, brain cells begin to die resulting in brain damage. How a stroke patient is affected depends on where the stroke occurs in the brain and much the brain is damaged.

A TIA, sometimes referred to as a mini-stroke, is an event where stroke symptoms last less than 24 hours before disappearing. While TIAs generally do not cause permanent brain damage, they are serious warning signs of stroke and should not be ignored!

Stroke symptoms include:

Sudden numbness or weakness of 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 walking difficulty, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination.

Sudden severe headache with no known cause.

Eighty percent of strokes are preventable, yet more than 795,000 people in the United States each year have a stroke at an estimated cost of 36.5 billion dollars; with 130,000 of those cases resulting in death.

There are many things a person can do to prevent a stroke from occurring. Most strokes can be treated successfully if symptoms are recognized F.A.S.T. Early recognition is vital and allows treatment to be more effective. F.A.S.T. is a method to be used for early recognition if you suspect someone may be suffering a stroke and is outlined as follows:

- **F = FACE** – Ask the person to smile. Does one side of the face droop?
- **A = Arms** – Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?
- **S = Speech** – Ask the person to repeat a simple phrase/sentence. Does the speech sound slurred or strange? Can he/she repeat the phrase/sentence correctly?
- **T = Time** - If you observe any of these signs or symptoms, it's time to call 9-1-1.

Risk factor management is another component of stroke prevention. Americans can **Stop Stroke** by understanding and managing common risk factors like high blood pressure, high cholesterol, atrial fibrillation (a type of heart disease), diabetes, excess weight, smoking, excessive alcohol use and TIAs.

Bristol Fire/Rescue promotes physician care as the best means of managing stroke risk factors and encourages everyone to take personal responsibility for their health and well being. Lifestyle adjustments, such as eating healthy foods and quitting smoking may reduce or eliminate your risk of suffering a stroke.