

Stroke Care: Every Minute Counts

In this country, it happens every 40 seconds and about every four minutes, someone dies from it.

A stroke's effects are sudden and the quicker a patient gets help, the better.

"The sooner you're here, the more definitive care and more opportunity you'll have for a meaningful recovery."

Stroke happens when blood flow doesn't get to brain cells and they die affecting the area of the body that those cells support.

Most strokes are ischemic, when blood flow is blocked in the vessels that supply blood to the brain.

"So ischemic stroke is the type that there's a blockage, and you have two types. You can look at it like this. Basically, there could be a local blockage, or the blockage can come from somewhere from distance basically."

Ischemic stroke is usually caused by a blood clot becoming lodged in the vessel delivering blood to part of the brain.

Some strokes are hemorrhagic, when there is bleeding in the brain due to a weakened blood vessel rupturing.

"The causes are various. A lot of times it's because of trauma. Blood pressure is very prevalent in causing hemorrhagic stroke. Then some patients have vascular abnormalities, either acquired or congenital."

Hemorrhagic strokes are usually caused by either an aneurysm - a weakened blood vessel that "balloons" – or an arteriovenous malformation or AVM, a tangle of malformed blood vessels in the brain.

When either an aneurysm or an AVM become weak and rupture, normal blood flow can't take place and the affected brain cells die.

No matter whether the stroke is caused by a clot blocking blood flow or a burst vessel bleeding, when the brain doesn't get enough oxygen, the person may lose the function associated with that part of the brain.

The longer it takes to restore blood flow, the greater the brain injury and potential loss of function will be.

Recognizing and responding quickly to the symptoms of a stroke is critical for getting evaluated and treated quickly.

"Yes, I need the ambulance. I think I'm having a stroke."

Those symptoms include: sudden numbness or weakness of the 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 trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination; sudden severe headache with no known cause.

The word F.A.S.T. is an easy way to remember how to recognize a stroke and what to do.

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F.A.S.T. stands for...Face drooping... Arm weakness... Speech Difficulty... Time to call 9-1-1.

A patient experiencing any stroke- like symptoms needs to call 9-1-1 and get to an emergency room as quickly as possible.

Early treatment can make all the difference.