



RESCUE

Resources & Education for Stroke Caregivers'
Understanding & Empowerment

May/June 2010

www.rorc.research.va.gov/rescue

This newsletter is a product of a VA research project titled "[Web-based Informational Materials for Caregivers of Veterans Post-Stroke](#)" (Project #SDP 06-327), funded by the VA Health Services Research & Development Quality Enhancement Research Initiative (QUERI). The objective of the project is to develop stroke and caregiver related information and materials to be posted on a VA Web site. Development of the information for the Web site will be based on identified gaps in currently available information and formative evaluation findings. The Web site, to launch in late-2010, will be: www.rorc.research.va.gov/rescue. Visit the Web site today to subscribe to the **RESCUE Newsletter!**

SPECIAL EDITION

National Stroke Awareness Month - May 2010

THE IMPORTANCE OF GETTING HELP RIGHT AWAY

Stroke, or "brain attack," is among the leading causes of death and disability in the United States. According to the American Heart Association, approximately 780,000 individuals experience a stroke each year. It is estimated that a quarter of stroke survivors will suffer another stroke within five years of the first one.

Stroke affects people of all ages, race, gender and socio-economic status. Stroke happens very fast with little to no warning. Seeking medical attention immediately can make the difference between life and death. **Every minute counts.**

The RESCUE project has a fact sheet titled "About Stroke," which provides general stroke information in easy-to-understand language. This fact sheet discusses the risk factors for stroke, ways to lower your risk and the importance of seeking medical attention immediately. The section below, from "About Stroke" lists the warning signs of a stroke.



If someone experiences one or more of the stroke warning signs listed below, CALL 911 IMMEDIATELY! These changes may last or may start, briefly subside, and then return.

- Sudden numbness or weakness of face, arm, or leg (mainly on one side)
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, or loss of balance
- Sudden confusion or trouble talking or understanding speech
- Sudden bad headache with no known cause

Teaching someone how to recognize a stroke can be as easy as S-T-R.

1. **S** - Ask the person to **SMILE**.
2. **T** - Ask the person to **TALK** or **SPEAK A SIMPLE SENTENCE** (coherently).
Example: "It is sunny out today."
3. **R** - Ask the person to **RAISE BOTH ARMS** together.

Take the "**Warning: Stroke Ahead**" quiz to see if you can recognize the warning signs of stroke:

<http://www.strokeassociation.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=3070550>





STROKE PREVENTION - REDUCING RISK FACTORS

Stroke risk factors are behavioral or environmental (and include pre-existing conditions) which can increase the likelihood of a person experiencing stroke. The same risk factors that increase the chance of having a stroke for the first time also apply to having a second stroke. Though the significance of risk factors will vary from person to person, there are two general categories of stroke risk factors: controllable and uncontrollable risk factors (see below).

	<p>CONTROLLABLE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High blood pressure • Diabetes mellitus • Carotid/other artery disease • Atrial fibrillation • Other heart disease • Sickle cell disease • High blood cholesterol • Poor diet • Physical inactivity/obesity • Drinking alcohol • Cigarette smoking 	<p>UNCONTROLLABLE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age • Heredity • Race • Gender • Prior cases/ conditions <p>OTHER FACTORS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geographic location • Socioeconomic
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Uncontrollable stroke risk factors, such as age or gender, cannot be changed. On the other hand, controllable risk factors can be changed, managed or treated to reduce the likelihood of having a stroke. Two major modifiable stroke risk factors, high-blood pressure and diabetes, are also risk factors for coronary heart disease and kidney disease. Below are some common things you can do to take control of your health and reduce your stroke risk.

Making healthy choices, such as eating more fruits and vegetables and reducing sodium intake, is a great start to preventing a stroke. Eating a nutritious, balanced diet plays an important role in managing blood pressure, blood sugar and weight. Daily exercise is also important for overall health and stroke prevention. Regular exercise can help reduce stress, which in turn can help keep blood pressure regulated. Even if exercising is limited or difficult, modified exercises or other activities, such as gardening, can be done. Two lifestyle changes that can reduce the risk for stroke and many other health conditions are 1) quitting smoking, and 2) reducing alcohol consumption. Smoking reduces oxygen level and thickens blood, which increases the risk of stroke, and alcohol can raise blood pressure.

Join the National Stroke Association (www.stroke.org) in celebrating National Stroke Awareness Month, May 2010.



MAY IS NATIONAL STROKE AWARENESS MONTH

This is an important time to educate the public about important stroke information, such as the warning signs of stroke and stroke risk factors. Did you know that research indicates that up to 80 percent of strokes might be prevented with prevention measures like better risk factor management? Learn more about risk factors for stroke, and if you are at risk, by visiting www.stroke.org/RISK.

Manageable risk factors for stroke include:

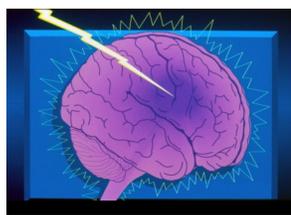
- High Blood Pressure
- Atrial Fibrillation
- High Cholesterol
- Diabetes
- Obesity
- Physical Inactivity
- Alcohol Use
- Tobacco Use and Smoking

To learn more about stroke or find ideas for how to spread awareness during May, visit www.stroke.org/SAM.



Did You Know?

National Stroke Awareness Month Edition



- A stroke is also known as a “brain attack.”
 - On average, every 40 seconds someone in the United States has a stroke.
 - Stroke is a leading cause of serious, long-term disability in the United States.
 - Each year, about 55,000 more women than men have a stroke.
 - When considered separately from other cardiovascular diseases, stroke ranks No. 3 among all causes of death, behind diseases of the heart and cancer.
 - The estimated direct and indirect cost of stroke for 2010 is \$73.7 billion.
- Of all strokes, 87% are ischemic (clots blocking an artery, keeping oxygen and vital nutrients from the brain), and 13% are hemorrhagic (known as a “bleeding stroke” where ruptured blood vessels bleed into the brain).

Information from AHA Heart Disease Stroke Statistics: 2010 Update At-A-Glance

To download, visit: http://www.americanheart.org/downloadable/heart/1265665152970DS-3241%20HeartStrokeUpdate_2010.pdf

American Stroke Association



According to the American Stroke Association (ASA), six out of ten Americans don't know where the stroke-certified hospitals are in their communities.

To help remedy this, the ASA has created a new stroke web -mapping site that can locate stroke-certified hospitals throughout the United States.

Find stroke care near you by visiting the ASA's stroke mapping Web site:
<http://maps.heart.org/quality>

MyHealthVet



My HealthVet (MHV), the VA healthcare portal, provides an educational and health promotion library of materials on certain health conditions to enable veterans to take control of their own health. The Health Education Library contains great information about Stroke.

Visit www.myhealth.va.gov, then click on the **RESEARCH HEALTH** tab, then click on **Disease + Condition Centers**. You will find the Stroke section under **Common Conditions**.

Register with MyHealthVet to receive access to even more helpful health-related information and tools.

Links in this Issue



DISCLAIMER OF HYPERLINKS: The appearance of external hyperlinks does not constitute endorsement by the Department of Veterans Affairs or the RESCUE Project of the linked web site, or the information, products or services offered by this site. In addition, this site may have privacy and security policies that are inconsistent with those of the Department of Veterans Affairs. For other than authorized VA activities, the Department does not exercise any editorial control over the information you may find at these locations. All links are provided with the intent of meeting the mission of the Department of Veterans Affairs and the RESCUE Newsletter and forthcoming Web site. Please let us know about existing external links which you believe are inappropriate.

<http://www.rorc.research.va.gov/rescue>

Web-Based Informational Materials for Caregivers of Veterans Post-Stroke

Project Number SDP 06-327 funded by VA HSR&D Quality Enhancement Research Initiative (QUERI)

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RESCUE

Resources & Education for Stroke Caregivers' Understanding & Empowerment

THE FOLLOWING EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS CAN BE DOWNLOADED AT THIS WEB SITE:

www.rorc.research.va.gov/rescue/prevention

REDUCE YOUR RISK



PREVENT A STROKE

THE WARNING SIGNS OF STROKE

Stroke sometimes occurs without warning. It can happen at any time, in any place, and to anyone.

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

If you or someone you know experience one or more of these signs, CALL 911 IMMEDIATELY!

HOW CAN I LOWER MY BLOOD PRESSURE?

Researcher believe that every dollar of a loan for the upper middle class people... Researcher believe that every dollar of a loan for the upper middle class people...

WHAT CAN I DO TO LOWER MY CHOLESTEROL LEVEL?

There are two main ways to lower your cholesterol level:

1. **Change your diet.** ...
2. **Take medicine.** ...

WHAT DO MY CHOLESTEROL NUMBERS MEAN?

When is cholesterol "normal"? ...

WHAT IS HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION)?

High blood pressure is a condition in which the force of the blood against the artery walls is too high.

Stroke Risk Scorecard

Risk Factor	High Risk (1-100)	Caution (120-150/80-90)	Low Risk (<120/80)
Cholesterol	>240	200-239	<200
Diabetes	Yes	No	No
Smoking	I still smoke	I'm trying to quit	I am a non-smoker
Arterial Fibrillation	I have an irregular heartbeat	I don't know	My heartbeat is not irregular
Diet	I am overweight	I am slightly overweight	My weight is healthy
Exercise	I am a couch potato	I exercise sometimes	I exercise regularly
I have stroke in my family	Yes	Not sure	No

Score (each box = 1)

Educational materials available to download include:

- Information about cholesterol and how to control it
- Information about high blood pressure (hypertension) and how to control it
- Quick reference of the warning signs of a stroke
- A stroke risk scorecard
- A stroke risk checklist
- Informational fact sheets about stroke and how to prevent it
- Information on how to act F.A.S.T.

Face Does the face droop? Ask them to smile.

Arm Does one arm dangle? Ask them to raise both arms.

Speech Ask if they can speak clearly.

Time Every second counts. Call 9-1-1 at any sign of stroke!

WHAT IS YOUR RISK FOR STROKE?

Uncontrollable Stroke Risk Factors: Age, Family History, Personal History of Diabetes, Race, High Blood Pressure, Previous TIA or Stroke.

Controllable Stroke Risk Factors: Smoking, Alcohol, Diet, Exercise, Stress, Medication.

Prevention is the Best Way to a Stroke-Free Life

Let's Talk About Stroke, TIA and Warning Signs

Let's Talk About Ischemic Strokes and Their Causes

Let's Talk About Lifestyle Changes to Prevent Stroke

Let's Talk About High Blood Pressure and Stroke

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