

Wellness Articles

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If you would like to be added to the distribution list for these articles, please email: Rebecca.johnson2@albertahealthservices.ca. You will receive a monthly email containing articles for the upcoming four weeks.

An archive of past wellness articles is available at <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/9966.asp>

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What is a stroke?

June is Stroke Awareness Month in Canada.

A stroke occurs when a blood vessel in the brain bursts or is blocked. Without blood and the oxygen it carries, part of the brain starts to die. The part of the body controlled by the damaged area of the brain can't work properly.

Brain damage can begin within minutes. That's why it's so important to know the symptoms of stroke and to act fast. Quick treatment can help limit damage to the brain and increase the chance of a full recovery.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of a stroke happen quickly. A stroke may cause:

- Sudden numbness, tingling, weakness, or loss of movement in your face, arm, or leg, especially on only one side of your body.
- Sudden vision changes.
- Sudden trouble speaking.
- Sudden confusion or trouble understanding simple statements.
- Sudden problems with walking or balance.
- A sudden, severe headache that is different from past headaches.

If you have any of these symptoms, even if they go away quickly, call 911 or other emergency services right away. A stroke can't be self-managed at home. To learn more www.ahs.ca/heartandstroke

The acronym FAST is a simple way to remember the main symptoms of stroke. Recognizing these symptoms helps you know when to call for medical help. FAST stands for:

- Face – Is it drooping?
- Arms – Can you raise both?
- Speech – Is it slurred or jumbled?
- Time – Call 911 immediately.

How can you prevent another stroke?

After you have had a stroke, you are at risk for having another one. But you can make some important lifestyle changes that can reduce your risk of stroke and improve your overall health.

Treat any health problems you have

- Manage high blood pressure or high cholesterol by working with your doctor.
- Manage diabetes. Keep your blood sugar levels within a target range.
- If your doctor recommends taking aspirin or a blood thinner, take it.
- Take your medicine exactly as prescribed. Call your doctor if you think you are having a problem with your medicine.
- Get the influenza (flu) vaccine every year.
- Adopt a healthy lifestyle
- Don't smoke or allow others to smoke around you.
- Limit alcohol. If you're a man, have no more than 3 standard drinks a day on most days and no more than 15 drinks a week. If you're a woman, have no more than 2 standard drinks a day on most days and no more than 10 drinks a week.
- Stay at a healthy weight. Being overweight makes it more likely you will develop high blood pressure, heart problems, and diabetes. These conditions make a stroke more likely.
- Be active. Ask your doctor what type and level of activity is safe for you. If you are in a stroke rehab program, your rehab team can make an exercise program that is right for you.
- Eat heart-healthy foods. These include fruits, vegetables, high-fibre foods, fish, and foods that are low in sodium, saturated fat, and trans fat.

For more information on strokes, please speak with your family doctor or call Health Link at 811 to speak with a Registered nurse.