

Fact Sheet

Stroke is the fifth leading cause of death and a leading cause of serious disability in the United States. Racial and ethnic minority and other diverse groups are at greater risk for death or disability due to stroke. You can lower your chances of having a stroke by controlling your blood pressure and cholesterol, not smoking, and taking an aspirin daily if prescribed by your health care provider.

Office of Minority Health and Health Equity

What is a stroke?

A stroke happens when brain cells die because they are no longer receiving oxygen and nutrients from the blood supply. There are various types of stroke:

- **Ischemic stroke** happens when a blood vessel in the brain becomes blocked. This reduces blood flow and oxygen to the brain.
- **Hemorrhagic stroke** happens when a blood vessel in the brain bursts and causes bleeding.
- **Transient ischemic attack (TIA)**, also known as a mini-stroke, has the same symptoms of a massive stroke, but blood flow to the brain is blocked for only a short time—usually no more than 5 minutes.



Stroke is the number one cause of disabilities among adults in the United States. It can cause physical disabilities such as complete weakness or paralysis on one side of the body. Stroke may also cause changes in thinking, awareness, attention, learning, judgment, and memory.

Some people recover fully from a stroke, but others may have lifelong disabilities. 1 in 4 people who recover from their first stroke will have another stroke within 5 years.

Identify symptoms of stroke with the F.A.S.T. method

- **F**ace drooping
- **A**rm weakness
- **S**peech difficulty
- **T**ime to call 911

Who is affected by stroke?

Strokes occur more often in African American and American Indian/Alaska Native adults than any other group. African Americans have nearly twice the risk of having a first stroke than non-Hispanic white people and have the highest rate of death due to stroke.

How are strokes treated?

The main goal of treatment is to try to stop a stroke while it is happening by quickly dissolving or removing the blood clot causing the ischemic stroke or by stopping the bleeding of a hemorrhagic stroke. Depending on the type of stroke, it can be treated with either medications or surgical procedures.

- **Ischemic stroke and TIA:** Medications thin the blood and dissolve blood clots. Surgical procedures can open blocked arteries.
- **Hemorrhagic stroke:** Patients taking medications for thinning the blood or preventing blood from clotting will be taken off these medications, which can make bleeding in the brain worse. Surgical procedures may be used to manage bleeding by removing damaged blood vessels or cutting off their blood supply.

Post-stroke rehabilitation helps stroke survivors improve their physical functioning and well-being. Therapy may involve relearning motor activities such as walking and sitting, everyday activities such as eating and dressing, as well as language and speaking skills.

Stroke and clinical trials

The FDA encourages diverse participation in clinical trials. If you think a clinical trial may be right for you, talk to your health care provider. You can also search for clinical trials in your area at www.clinicaltrials.gov.

For more information on health equity, visit www.fda.gov/healthequity.