

What To Do If You Think You Are Having A Stroke

A stroke occurs when there's a blockage of blood flow to the brain. Strokes are medical emergencies — getting medical help to stop a stroke in progress is critical in preventing stroke complications such as permanent brain damage or death.

Treatment for stroke is most effective within 3 hours of when you first experience symptoms of a stroke, so your quick action can make a difference if you or a loved one is having symptoms of a stroke.

Here's what you need to know about the signs of a stroke:

Use the FAST method for diagnosing a potential stroke.

This includes the following steps:

- Face: Ask them to smile and note whether one side of their face droops.
- Arms: Ask them to raise their arms and note whether one arm is drifting down compared to the other.
- Speech: Notice whether your loved one's speech is slurred or sounds unusual in any way.
- Time: If you observe any of the above signs, call 911. You'll also want to tell medical personnel what time you observed possible stroke symptoms so they can determine the best course of treatment.

A stroke is considered an emergency where every minute counts. The quicker a stroke is treated, the less likely that permanent brain damage may develop.

While it may be tempting to take a “wait-and-see” approach when you're experiencing unusual symptoms, there is nothing you can do at home to stop or reverse a stroke in progress — only a doctor can treat a stroke.

Any case of a suspected stroke must be treated as an emergency situation. Call 911 for help right away. An ambulance can help take you or your loved one to the hospital and begin immediate, potentially life-saving treatment.

What NOT to do during a Stroke

- avoid calling 911
- try to drive yourself or a loved one to the hospital — it's best to wait for an ambulance and get immediate help from a paramedic.
- go to sleep
- eat any food or drink any liquids.
- take any medications — these can become a choking hazard and possibly increase the risk of bleeding, depending on the type of medication.

Key takeaways

Acting quickly is crucial because stroke treatments are most effective within 3 to 4.5 hours of the first symptoms; immediate medical intervention can significantly reduce the risk of permanent brain damage or death.

Use the FAST method to quickly identify potential stroke symptoms: check for Face drooping, Arm weakness, Speech difficulties, and act fast by calling 911 if any of these signs are present.