

# ARE YOU AT RISK FOR A *Brain Attack?*

If you suspect someone is having a stroke, **CALL 911** right away. Early intervention is vital in treatment.

## Signs of a stroke

- Numbness or weakness, especially on one side of the body
- Loss of balance or coordination
- The inability to speak clearly or to understand spoken words
- Severe, sudden onset of headache without a prior history of severe headache

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It is relatively well known that cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women throughout the world, accounting for a full 25% of deaths. What is sometimes less well appreciated, however, is that stroke is the number three leading cause of death worldwide. Stroke accounts for more death than the seven leading causes of cancer combined. Women are also particularly at risk, due to the fact that although stroke strikes both men and woman at an equal rate, women account for about 62% of the deaths from stroke, a 12% relative increase from that of men. Strikingly, stroke kills more than twice as many woman annually than breast cancer, a disease typically reported by woman as their leading health concern.

Through various organizations, including the American Heart Association, awareness of the impact of stroke is on the rise. There has been excellent acceptance of the concept of rapid recognition and action for chest pain to identify the possibility of heart attack. Now the focus has shifted to inform people of the importance of rapid recognition of the signs and symptoms of stroke. Stroke is, in reality, a “brain attack” where vital blood flow to a portion of the brain is cut off, causing the brain tissue to die. Thus, in order to encourage people to act quickly and definitively when faced with the possibility of stroke, the use of the concept of a “brain attack” has gained popularity.

Acting quickly at the onset of a stroke is vital as there is only a three-hour window that clot-busting medications can be safely administered. If you suspect that someone is having a stroke, call 911 immediately. It’s important to get them emergency attention right away so a definitive diagnosis and early therapy can begin.

The best way to avoid stroke, however, is to modify the risk factors responsible:

- Stop smoking
- Control blood pressure
- Lower your cholesterol
- Control your diabetes
- Include moderate physical activity in your lifestyle

These are proven ways to not only help reduce the risk of stroke, but also cardiovascular disease and death. 



*Dr. Carl Fier specializes in peripheral vascular medicine and endovascular surgery at New Hampshire Cardiology Consultants, located at Elliot Hospital, 627-1669.*

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