



Learn The Signs And Symptoms Of A Stroke - May Is National Stroke Awareness Month

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O'FALLON, Ill. — When a stroke occurs, doctors often say “time is brain.” That’s because every minute the brain is without oxygen due to a stroke, two million brain cells die. This can often lead to brain damage, disability or death.

“Treatment for stroke can begin in the ambulance, so it’s really important to get someone who may be having a stroke medical assistance as soon as possible,” says Dr. Pavan Gupta, cardiologist with Prairie Cardiovascular. “Always call 9-1-1 if a stroke is suspected as immediate treatment and early intervention may minimize the long-term effects of stroke.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), someone in the United States has a stroke every 40 seconds and someone dies of stroke every four minutes.

HSHS St. Elizabeth’s Hospital encourages everyone to know the signs of a stroke by remembering the phrase/acronym **BE FAST**:

B – Balance difficulty: Sudden loss of balance or coordination, weakness or dizziness

E – Eye changes: Sudden onset of vision changes in one or both eyes

F – Face drooping: Sudden onset of facial drooping, usually on one side

A – Arm weakness: Sudden weakness or numbness in the arm, leg or face, usually on one side of the body

S – Speech difficulty: Sudden onset of trouble speaking or difficulty in understanding speech

T – Terrible headache: Sudden onset of severe headache with no known cause

The CDC says 80% of strokes are preventable by making lifestyle changes to reduce your risk:

- Don't smoke
- Be physically active
- Control cholesterol
- Control blood pressure
- Maintain a healthy body weight
- Reduce blood sugar

Dr. Gupta says those preventative actions are also important because they are within your control. Other things like age, family history, race and gender are not.

If you think someone is having a stroke, call 9-1-1 immediately. For more information about signs, symptoms and how to respond, visit the [American Stroke Association](#) or the [CDC](#) stroke webpage.

Ready to Care for You

HSHS St. Elizabeth's Hospital is designated as an Acute Stroke Ready Hospital by the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH). The Illinois Department of Public Health makes these designations based on the hospital's ability to meet certain criteria aligned with nationally recognized, evidence-based standards, such as those from the American Heart/Stroke Association and Brain Attack Coalition.

To learn more about HSHS St. Elizabeth's stroke care, visit our website [hshs.org/StElizabets/Services/Stroke-Care](https://www.hshs.org/StElizabets/Services/Stroke-Care). For more general information about HSHS St. Elizabeth's Hospital, visit [steliz.org](https://www.steliz.org).