



American Heart Association®

Hard Hats with Heart™



Toolbox Talks

What is a Stroke?

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Blood vessels that carry blood to the brain from the heart are called arteries. The brain needs a constant supply of blood, which carries the oxygen and nutrients it needs to function. Specific arteries supply blood to specific areas of the brain. A stroke occurs when one of these arteries to the brain is either blocked or bursts. As a result, part of the brain does not get the blood it needs, so it starts to die.

Blood Flow in Normal and Blocked Arteries

An artery can become blocked by plaque (a fatty substance in the wall of the artery) or a blood clot, which reduces blood flow to the brain and causes a stroke. A blockage can also be caused by atherosclerosis, which is a hardening of the arteries and is caused partly by cholesterol or plaque buildup.

Know the Warning Signs

By learning and sharing the F.A.S.T. warning signs, you just might save a life from stroke.

F = Face Drooping – Does one side of the face droop or is it numb? Ask the person to smile. Is the person's smile uneven?

A = Arm Weakness – Is one arm weak or numb? Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?

S = Speech Difficulty – Is speech slurred?

T = Time to call 911

Other Stroke Symptoms. Watch for sudden:

- NUMBNESS or weakness of face, arm, or leg, especially on one side of the body
- CONFUSION, trouble speaking or understanding speech
- TROUBLE SEEING in one or both eyes
- TROUBLE WALKING, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- SEVERE HEADACHE with no known cause

Frequently Asked Questions:

What are silent strokes and do they have symptoms?

Silent strokes are undetected strokes. They occur when a blood vessel blockage in the brain causes cells to die, but no warning signs or symptoms are obvious.

The condition is more common with increasing age, and in people who smoke or have a history of vascular disease (conditions that affect your blood vessels).

Discussion Questions:

- Did any of the warning signs surprise you?