What are the stroke warning signs?

You and your family should learn the warning signs of stroke today. If you or someone you’re with has any of these signs, a stroke may be occurring:

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden, severe headache with no known cause

Not all of these warning signs occur in every stroke. If one does, don’t wait. Get help immediately. Stroke is a medical emergency — call 9-1-1.

Can a stroke be stopped?

In the past, doctors couldn’t do much to help stroke victims. That’s not true today. Now stroke doesn’t have to lead to disability or death. The key is to recognize a stroke and get to the hospital immediately. The clot-dissolving drug tPA (tissue plasminogen activator) can reduce long-term disability if it’s given within three hours after an ischemic stroke starts. (Ischemic strokes are caused by clots and are by far the most common type of stroke.)

Unfortunately, tPA isn’t used as often as it could be because many people don’t seek care quickly. Don’t make that mistake. If you or someone near you has the warning signs of a stroke, call 9-1-1 immediately.

What steps can I take to prevent stroke?

By learning your risk factors, you can help prevent a stroke. Use the quiz on page 11 to learn where to focus your efforts. Then work with your doctor to reduce, control or prevent as many risk factors as you can. Studies show that treatments to reduce risk could decrease the number of strokes by as much as 80 percent, if used in the right situations.

What are the key points to remember?

- **Reduce** your chances of having a stroke by learning the risk factors and working with your doctor to help reduce your risk.
- **Recognize** the warning signs of a stroke. Stroke is a medical emergency. Every second counts!
- **Respond** by calling 9-1-1 immediately if you or someone close to you is having warning signs of stroke. Then check the time. When did the first symptom start? You’ll be asked this important question later.