



BEAT THE CLOCK

DON'T DELAY RESPONDING TO A STROKE

A stroke injures the most fragile organ in your body—the brain. To function properly, your brain relies on a constant flow of blood. During a stroke, brain cells are deprived of blood and oxygen and they begin to die. The dying cells set off a chain reaction, damaging other nearby cells. Without quick medical attention, these cells will also die.

Strokes affect people in different ways. Depending on its location, size, severity and type, a stroke can affect anything from your senses to your ability to speak and think.

Taking care of yourself and monitoring your health are critical to decreasing your risk for a stroke. But if you have a stroke, it's important to recognize the symptoms and take action quickly. Stroke can happen suddenly, and you may not feel any pain. Even if symptoms last for only a few minutes, seek help. Brief mini-strokes can be a warning of a larger stroke to follow and need immediate attention.

According to stroke expert Richard Atkinson, MD, at least 50 percent of strokes are preventable by currently available treatments. Since prevention is the key, it's extremely important for everyone know the symptoms of a stroke. To help you recognize the most common symptoms of a stroke, think of the word **SAFE**.

- S** **SPEECH**
You may have trouble with speech, talking or comprehension.
- A** **ARM**
You may have weakness or clumsiness in your arm.
- F** **FACE**
You may have weakness in one or both sides of the face.
- E** **EYE**
You may experience vision loss or sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes.

Other symptoms include headache, dizziness or confusion. The **SAFE** symptoms are the most common and usually indicate a stroke. If you notice any of these symptoms, call 911 or your local emergency number right away.