

Think F.A.S.T. and Act FAST!

The Health Column

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2017

“Stroke can affect Australians of any age. One in six will have a stroke in their lifetime?”

Stroke damages our brain. It is one of Australia’s biggest killers and a leading cause of disability.

- In 2017, there will be over 56,000 new and recurrent strokes – so 1 stroke every 9 minutes
- Stroke kills more women than breast cancer
- Stroke kills more men than prostate cancer
- Around 65% of those living with stroke also suffer a disability that affects their capacity to do activities unassisted or to live independently.

Types of stroke

A *stroke* happens when the blood supply to our brain is interrupted or blocked by either a blood clot or plaque. Arteries delivering blood to the brain can then rupture causing the oxygenated blood carrying nutrients for your brain cells to be affected.

- An **ischemic stroke** is caused by a blood clot in an artery. When brain cells do not get enough oxygen or nutrients, they die.
- A **haemorrhagic stroke** happens when an artery bursts bleeding into the brain creating pressure and swelling that damaging brain cells. The area of brain damage is called a *cerebral infarct*.

Brain cells usually die shortly after the stroke starts, but some cells can last a few hours, if the blood supply is not cut off completely. If the blood supply can be returned in the minutes and hours after the stroke, some of these cells may recover.

A **‘mini stroke’** (or *transient ischaemic attack - TIA*) occurs when there is a temporary interruption of the blood supply to the brain. It causes the same signs and symptoms as a stroke, but these go away completely within 24 hours. This *warning sign* should be checked by your doctor.

Recognise STROKE Think F.A.S.T.



If you see any of these symptoms
Act FAST
call **000**

 F Has their FACE drooped?	 A Can they lift both ARMS?	 S Is their SPEECH slurred and do they understand you?	 T Call 000 , TIME is critical
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In **National Stroke Week** (4-10 September 2017) <https://strokefoundation.org.au> every Australian household needs someone who knows the signs of stroke and to call 000. Most treatments for stroke are time sensitive so it is important to *Think F.A.S.T.* and *Act FAST!*

The Stroke Foundation recommends the **F.A.S.T.** test as an easy way to remember the most common signs of stroke. Using F.A.S.T. ask these simple questions:

- **Face** ➤ Check their face. Has their mouth drooped?
- **Arms** ➤ Can they lift both arms?
- **Speech** ➤ Is their speech slurred? Do they understand you?
- **Time** ➤ *This is critical.* If you see any of these signs call 000 straight away.

A STROKE IS ALWAYS A MEDICAL EMERGENCY and immediate treatment improves the chance of survival and successful rehabilitation. The risk of stroke and *second stroke* is influenced by a number of factors. The more stroke risk factors the higher your chances of stroke.

Are you at risk of stroke?				
1. Stroke factors you can't control	As you age your risk of stroke increases	Stroke is more common in men	A family history of stroke	
2. Medical stroke risk factors	transient ischaemic attack (TIA)	irregular pulse (atrial fibrillation)	diabetes	fibromuscular dysplasia
3. Lifestyle factors you can control	obesity or being overweight	smoking	poor diet	drinking too much alcohol

Tips to lower your risk of stroke

- **Know your blood pressure** and have it checked regularly. High blood can lead to a stroke.
- **Healthy eating.** Enjoy a variety of foods especially plant based foods including fresh fruit and vegetables, legumes and wholegrain breads and cereals.
- **Get active.** Exercise at least 30 minutes daily. Inactivity increases risk of stroke, high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, diabetes and heart disease.
- **Have your cholesterol checked regularly** – high cholesterol contributes to stroke risk.
- **Drop the salt.** Cut down on takeaway foods, don't add salt at the table or when cooking.
- **Limit alcohol.** Stay within recommended limits for drinking alcohol (no more than two standard drinks per day).
- **Quit smoking.** Call the Quitline on 13 78 48 or ask your pharmacist about treatment options.

Contact your friendly local pharmacist for more information about stroke and stroke risk factors you can control. Many pharmacies around Australia also provide the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia's Self Care health information **Self Care Fact Cards**. These offer relevant ways to control stroke risk factors. Titles available include: *High blood pressure* and *Weight and health*.

For the nearest Self Care pharmacy location phone the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia on 1300 369 772, or go to www.psa.org.au/selfcare, then click 'Find a *Self Care pharmacy* near you'.