

Stroke--Time Lost is Brain Lost

As the leading cause of disability and the third leading cause of death in the United States, stroke is a major public health problem. An estimated 700,000 to 750,000 new or recurrent strokes occur each year in the United States, according to a 2000 report in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

In 2004 New York State had 6,855 deaths due to stroke, according to NYS Vital Records. There are two kinds of stroke, ischemic and hemorrhagic.

A hemorrhagic stroke occurs when a blood vessel that carries oxygen and nutrients to the brain burst and spills blood into the brain. In an ischemic stroke a blood vessel becomes blocked usually by a blood clot. In both cases the brain becomes deprived of oxygen and will stop functioning and die in minutes.

Time lost is brain lost.

Ischemic strokes account for 80% of all strokes. Rapid diagnosis and treatment of acute ischemic strokes is critical in addressing the reduction of death and disability from stroke.

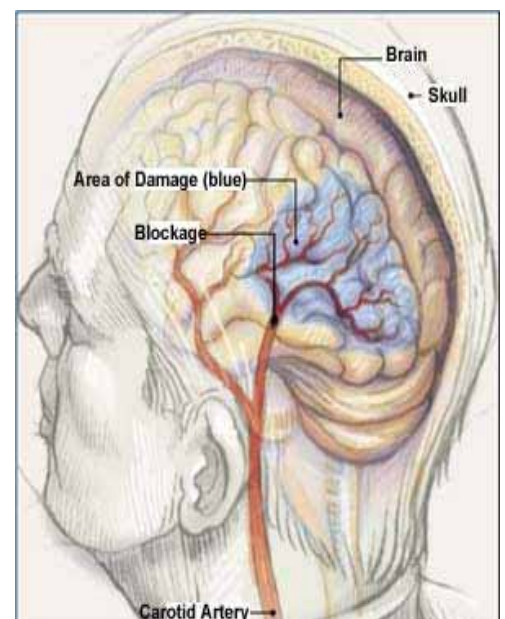
The Food and Drug Administration approved t-PA for the treatment for ischemic stroke in 1996, currently, t-PA is the only approved treatment option for acute ischemic stroke and is only available to patients presenting within three hours of symptom onset to emergency departments. Because of the short window of opportunity for effective treatment it is critical to seek emergency care at the first symptom.

Increasing Rapid Response for Stroke

Increasing the number of New Yorkers who receive fast and appropriate medical care for stroke is one of the 19 objectives in New York State's Plan for Cardiovascular Health.

The aim is to stress the importance of knowing the signs and symptoms of stroke and the importance of treatment as an emergency. Once in the hospital there are still many steps to be taken before a person can receive the medication t-PA, and time is short.

Patients need to have CT scans and other diagnostic tests prior to receiving t-PA. Stroke care begins from the time a person calls 9-1-1. EMS will notify the local hospital emergency department of a potential stroke victim and this will save precious time.



Stroke Signs

The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke notes these signs of stroke:

1. Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body.
2. Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding.
3. Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance, or coordination.
4. Sudden severe headache with no known cause.

All of the major symptoms of stroke appear suddenly, and without warning and they are often not painful but still need to be taken seriously. If you think someone is experiencing any of these symptoms, or you are experiencing them call 9-1-1 immediately.

Reducing Risk

All persons can take steps to reduce their risk for stroke by knowing their own risk factors for stroke and taking action to reduce those risks. Talk to your doctor about what you can do to reduce your risk for stroke.

1. High Blood Pressure or Hypertension (leading cause of stroke)
2. Carotid or Coronary Artery Disease
3. Atrial Fibrillation (Irregular Heart Beat)
4. Diabetes
5. Tobacco Use
6. Prior Transient Ischemic Accident (TIA) or Stroke
7. Elevated levels of cholesterol
8. Excessive Alcohol use
9. Genetics

More Information

- [Learn the Signs of Stroke--FAST](#) (900 kb, PDF)
- <http://www.cdc.gov/Stroke/index.htm>
- <http://www.strokeassociation.org/>
- Contact Tiana Howland RN, in the Healthy Heart Program, at txh12@health.state.ny.us or 518-474-6683