

Partners in Quality Care

Cerebrovascular accident (CVA), also known as *stroke* is a leading cause of death in the United States. A stroke, sometimes called a brain attack, occurs when a clot blocks the blood supply to the brain or when a blood vessel in the brain bursts. A person can greatly reduce their risk for stroke through lifestyle changes and, in some cases, medication.

Stroke can cause death or significant disability, such as paralysis, speech difficulties, and emotional problems. Some new treatments can reduce stroke damage if patients get medical care soon after symptoms begin. When a stroke happens, it is important to recognize the symptoms, call 9-1-1 right away, and get to a hospital quickly.



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For more information on AHHC's endorsed risk management and insurance program, visit:
<http://www.homeandhospicecare.org/insurance/home.html>

What you will learn:

- Facts about Stroke
- Symptoms of Stroke
- The Aide's Role in working with a client who has had a stroke

Sudden Signs of Stroke

F.A.S.T. is an easy way to remember the sudden signs of stroke. When you can spot the signs, you'll know that you need to call 9-1-1 for help right away. F.A.S.T. is:

Letter 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?

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

Letter S *Speech Difficulty – Is speech slurred? Is the person unable to speak or hard to understand? Ask the person to repeat a simple sentence, like "The sky is blue." Is the sentence repeated correctly?

Letter T *Time to call 9-1-1 – If someone shows any of these symptoms, even if the symptoms go away, call 9-1-1 and get the person to the hospital immediately. Check the time so you'll know when the first symptoms appeared.

Risk Factors for Stroke

High blood pressure, high LDL cholesterol, and smoking are key risk factors for stroke. About **half of Americans** (49%) have at least one of these three risk factors.

Several other medical conditions and lifestyle choices can also put people at a higher risk for stroke, including:

- Diabetes
- Overweight and obesity
- Poor diet
- Physical inactivity
- Excessive alcohol use
- You can't control some stroke risk factors, like heredity, age, gender, and ethnicity. Some medical conditions—including high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart disease, diabetes, overweight or obesity, and previous stroke or transient ischemic attack (TIA)—can also raise your stroke risk. Avoiding smoking and drinking too much alcohol, eating a balanced diet, and getting exercise are all choices you can make to reduce your risk.



What Can You Do As An Aide?

- Follow the Care Plan
- *Assist to Prevent Falls*
- Assist with mobility
- Assist in preventing pressure sores
- Provide support and encouragement
- Assist with ADLs- bathing, dressing, grooming, toileting, others
- Encourage independence
- Perform or assist with exercises
- If the client is having difficulty with communication, ask questions that can be answered with a “yes” or “no”, you can also use nonverbal communication such as gestures, pictures, flash cards and other communication helpers
- Use assistive devices (special toothbrushes, combs, soap on a rope, raised toilet seat, bedside commode) and others as directed
- Promote client mobility through range of motion exercises and ambulation (if possible)
- Follow safety guidelines
- Change the patient’s position every 2 hours and check skin for injury; the client should not lie on affected side any longer than 1 hour
- Do not pull on or use the affected limb when lifting or moving the client
- Watch for swelling, discoloration, and pain in the affected limb
- Schedule rest periods between activities due to the client tiring easily
- Remind the client to follow instructions about proper swallowing techniques

Remember- Rehabilitation after a stroke (physical therapy, speech therapy, occupational therapy) is long and hard work for the client. Be patient with your client!

Resources- CDC- Stroke; American Stroke Association; Mosby’s Textbook for the Home Care Aide- third edition.

Symptoms depend on the extent of the brain injury and the area involved and may include problems with the following:

- Communication- Due to difficulty receiving, understanding, and expressing speech and language. Clients may have slurred speech and problems finding the “right” word they want to say.
- Due to poor balance, the client is at great risk of falls
- Due to limited mobility, weakness and perception problems, there may be severe problems with performing Activities of Daily Living (ADL’s) and clients usually require a great deal of assistance with grooming and hygiene
- Safety due to poor balance and possible paralysis of a part of the body and possible defective vision
- Pain in affected shoulder or arm due to the weight of the paralyzed arm pulling on joints
- Nutrition due to difficulty in swallowing, self-feeding and awareness
- Depression due to effects of serious illness, problems with mobility (getting around), and long recovery times. Clients may have low self-esteem because of the many losses they have experienced and the need to depend on others for so much care.
- Emotions change so quickly that the client and family may not understand what is happening. These rapid mood swings are a result of damage to the brain tissue and are not an indication of true feelings.

Observe, Record, and Report:

- **Coughing, and choking when eating and swallowing**
- **Incontinence (can’t control urine and/ or bowels)**
- **Constipation**
- **Skin changes**
- **Complaints of pain**
- **Depression**
- **Signs of Infection**
- **Other observations as assigned on the Plan of Care**

In-Home Aide newsletter- August 2013 POST-TEST –Stroke

Employee name- _____

Read the following questions and check the correct answer:

1. High blood pressure is a key risk factor for stroke.

True

False

2. Stroke is not a leading cause of death in the United States.

True

False

3. It is important to recognize the symptoms of a stroke right away.

True

False

4. The risk factors for stroke include which of the following (mark all that apply):

a) High blood pressure

b) Obesity

c) Diabetes

d) Smoking

e) All of the above

5. Sudden signs of a stroke include which of the following (mark all that apply):

a) Face drooping or numbness

b) Arm weakness or numbness

c) Speech difficulty or slurred speech

d) Uneven smile

e) All of the above

6. Changes in behavior (mood swings) can be a complication of stroke.

True

False

7. There is nothing anyone can do to help prevent your risk of stroke.

True

False

8. Some of the aide's roles include:

- a) Prevention of falls
- b) Assisting with mobility
- c) Providing support and encouragement
- d) Encouraging independence
- e) All of the above

9. You can help by keeping things simple.

True

False

10. Symptoms of a stroke are always the same for everyone.

True

False