

DEBUNKING THE MYTHS OF STROKE



A stroke or transient ischemic attack (TIA), also referred to as a “mini-stroke,” occurs when a blood vessel feeding the brain gets clogged or bursts. Neither that part of the brain nor the part of the body it controls can then function properly. Knowledge is brain power! Lower your risk by understanding the common misconceptions of stroke versus the reality of stroke.

Myth: Strokes are rare.

Reality: Stroke is the **leading cause of adult disability** in the U.S. and Europe, and it is the second leading cause of death worldwide (fourth in the U.S.). In fact, every two seconds, someone in the world suffers a stroke. Sadly, **stroke remains the #3 cause of death for U.S. women** and #5 cause of death for U.S. men; therefore, it is the #4 cause of death in the U.S. overall.

Myth: Stroke happens in the heart.

Reality: Like heart disease, stroke is a cardiovascular disease; however, it affects the arteries leading to and within the brain — often referred to as a “**brain attack**.”

Myth: Stroke is unpreventable.

Reality: Approximately 85% of all strokes can be prevented with the lifesaving knowledge of risk factors and symptoms, paired with proper lifestyle choices.

Myth: A severe headache is the sole indicator of a stroke.

Reality: Headache is the most common symptom of stroke, but one may also experience slurred speech, numbness or weakness (especially on one side of the body), confusion, dizziness, or blurred vision.

Myth: Stroke cannot be treated.

Reality: Stroke is a 9-1-1 emergency, but not a death sentence. Urgent treatment may include clot-busting medication, surgical interventions, or other lifesaving actions as deemed appropriate by trained medical professionals. There is life after stroke!

Myth: Stroke only strikes the elderly.

Reality: Stroke can happen to anyone including children and babies in utero; though age, heredity, race, and gender can increase one’s risk. For example, the incidence of stroke is higher among African Americans than Caucasians, in part because African Americans have a higher risk of elevated blood pressure, diabetes, and obesity. **More women than men die of a stroke annually — women are 2.5 times more likely to have a stroke than breast cancer.** Unfortunately, **the number of strokes among young and middle-aged Americans is rising dramatically**, a likely sign that the obesity epidemic may be starting to shift the age burden of this cardiovascular disease.

Myth: Stroke recovery and rehabilitation is short-term focused and typically lasts only for a few months.

Reality: Stroke recovery is a continual journey filled with opportunities to heal through conventional and holistic treatments, hope, and patience. Bottom-line: Never give up! Visit www.Bcenter.org, a virtual stroke center operated by Global Stroke Resource, Inc., to access informative and motivational tools. While stroke survivors and caregivers can especially benefit from Bcenter.com’s recovery aids, EVERYONE should understand stroke prevention and memorize *F.A.S.T.*, an acronym used to recognize stroke warning signs.