

According to new survey, people more likely to witness a stroke might not know how to identify one

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Crystal Wall was having a typical chat on the phone with her sister Chassity Anderson—until her sister's phone abruptly crashed to the floor and her words suddenly became slurred.

Anderson, 37, was having another stroke.

"Because my sister had suffered from stroke before, I recognized the warning signs and knew to call 9-1-1," Wall said. "I know stroke is something that can happen to anyone at any time and if it does, you have to act quickly. The longer you wait, the worse it can be."

Paramedics quickly arrived and transferred Anderson to the hospital, where she later recovered.

One in six people worldwide will have a stroke in their lifetime. In the United States, someone has a stroke every 40 seconds.

In recognition of [World Stroke Day](#) on Oct. 29, the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association urges those who care for others to learn the stroke warning signs, since bystanders often need to act fast in an emergency.

A new survey commissioned by the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association found that many people who

care for family or friends at high risk for stroke don't know the potentially life-saving warning signs.

- Only 41 percent of people who care for individuals with health concerns other than stroke know three or more stroke warning signs as compared to 58 percent of those who care for stroke survivors.
- Knowledge of three or more stroke warning signs was slightly better (46 percent) among people who care for individuals with high [blood pressure](#), a major risk factor for stroke.
- Virtually all surveyed said they would call 9-1-1 if they thought someone was having a stroke, but a recent study showed more than a third of stroke patients don't get to the hospital by ambulance.

"The patient doesn't always recognize their own stroke and when they do, sometimes their symptoms make calling for help difficult, if not impossible," said Demetrius Lopes, M.D., surgical director of RUSH University Stroke Center in Chicago and American Heart Association/American Stroke Association spokesperson. "Just like we need to learn CPR to save someone else's life, we need to learn how to spot a stroke and act fast for the best chance of a positive outcome."

The American Stroke Association's Together to End Stroke initiative, nationally sponsored by Covidien, a global healthcare product company, teaches the acronym F.A.S.T. to remember stroke warning signs:

F - Face Drooping: Does one side of the face droop or is it numb? Ask the person to smile.

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

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

T - Time to call 9-1-1: If the person shows any of these symptoms, even if the symptoms go away, call 9-1-1 and get them to the hospital immediately.

"Those with loved ones who have [stroke risk](#) factors should make it a priority to learn F.A.S.T. and teach others," said Lopes. "Recognizing a stroke and calling 9-1-1 gives the patient a greater chance of getting to an appropriate hospital quickly and being assessed for life-saving treatment like a clot-busting drug or medical device."

The association offers a free mobile app to help people spot a stroke and identify award-winning hospitals nearby.

This year, 795,000 people in the United States will have a first or recurrent stroke. Other than a prior stroke, major stroke [risk factors](#) include:

- **High blood pressure** – It's the most important controllable risk factor for stroke. About 77 percent of people who have a first stroke have blood pressure higher than 140/90 mm Hg. An estimated 78 million Americans have hypertension.
- **Transient ischemic attack** – About 15 percent of strokes are preceded by a TIA (or "mini stroke").
- **Atrial fibrillation (Afib)** – It increases stroke risk up to five times and affects more than 2.7 million Americans.
- **Smoking** – Current smokers have two to four times the [stroke](#) risk of nonsmokers or those who quit more than 10 years ago. In 2011, 21.3 percent of men and 16.7 percent of women 18 or older were cigarette smokers.

Provided by American Heart Association

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