

Video game teaches kids about stroke symptoms and calling 9-1-1

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Children improved their understanding of stroke symptoms and what to do if they witness a stroke after playing a 15-minute stroke education video game, according to new research reported in the American Heart Association journal *Stroke*.

Researchers tested 210 9- and 10-year-old, low-income children from the Bronx, New York, on whether they could identify [stroke](#) and knew to call 9-1-1 if they saw someone having a stroke. Researchers tested the children again after they played a stroke education video game, called Stroke Hero. Finally, they gave the children remote access to the video game and encouraged them to play at home, re-testing 198 of the children seven weeks later.

Researchers found:

- Children were 33 percent more likely to recognize stroke from a hypothetical scenario and call 9-1-1 after they played the video game. They retained the knowledge when they were re-tested seven weeks later.
- Children who continued to play the game remotely were 18 percent more likely to recognize the stroke symptom of sudden imbalance than were the children who played the video game only once.
- Ninety percent of the children studied reported they liked playing Stroke Hero. While 67 percent said they would play it at home, only about 26 percent did. Researchers didn't examine why.

"We need to educate the public, including children, about stroke, because often it's the witness that makes that 9-1-1 call; not the [stroke victim](#). Sometimes, these witnesses are young children," said Olajide Williams, M.D., M.S., lead author and associate professor of neurology at Columbia University in New York City.

The Stroke Hero [video game](#) involves navigating a clot-busting spaceship within an artery, and shooting down blood clots with a clot-busting drug. When the supply of clot-busting drugs runs out, gamers must answer stroke awareness questions in order to refuel. The game is synced to a hip hop song.

The study suggests that the novel approach of using video games to teach children about stroke could have far-reaching implications. However, the study was small and there was no comparison group, so the results should be viewed with caution, Williams said.

"Video games are fun, widely available and accessible for most [children](#)," Williams said. "Empowering every potential witness with the knowledge and skills required to make that life-saving decision if they witness a stroke is critical."

Provided by American Heart Association

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