

How to lower your stroke risk

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Neurologist suggests healthier lifestyle, treatment of heart conditions to help prevent brain attack.

(HealthDay)—There are a number of ways you can reduce your risk of stroke, a neurologist says.

"Stroke is the fifth leading cause of death in the United States, and a leading cause of disability," Dr. Jose Biller, chair of Illinois-based Loyola University's department of neurology, said in a university news release. "Stroke can happen to anyone at any age."

Stroke risk is increased by lifestyle factors such as smoking, drinking, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, obesity, as well as certain heart conditions and mini-strokes (called "[transient ischemic attacks](#)").

When a [stroke](#) occurs, brain cells begin to die. That means it's critically important to be able to recognize the signs of stroke and call 911 immediately.

"Time is brain. Prompt treatment potentially can reduce stroke damage significantly," Biller said.

A system called FAST can help you recognize [stroke symptoms](#) in someone else:

- Face. Ask the person to smile. Does one side of the face droop?
- Arms. Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?
- Speech. Ask the person to repeat a simple phrase. Does the speech sound slurred or strange?
- Time. If you observe any of these signs, it's time to call 911.

May is National Stroke Awareness Month.

More information: The U.S. National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute has more about [stroke](#).

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