

When it comes to strokes, timing is everything

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Sudden onset of blurred vision, slurred speech, numbness or paralysis in the face, arm, or leg can be indications of a stroke. Oftentimes, many wait to seek help, but this can be a fatal mistake: the risks of permanent damage or death increase the longer treatment is delayed. In fact, six million people die and another five million become permanently disabled because of a stroke each year.

Nationally, the number of [stroke](#) deaths has declined, but in Kentucky, strokes are increasing. Yet stroke is a largely preventable disease: by keeping our [blood pressure](#), cholesterol, weight and/or diabetes in check we greatly reduce our risk... When a stroke occurs, however, the most important factor is [time](#).

The Stroke Care Network, a partnership between UK Healthcare and Norton Healthcare, is an affiliation of 34 regional hospitals dedicated to the highest-quality stroke care during a critical time. The SCN has developed, based on extensive research, a system of care that provides prompt diagnosis and treatment to minimize the damage a stroke can cause.

A key step in stroke diagnosis is a computerized tomography (CT) scan to find bleeding in the brain or damage to the brain cells. Since 2015, the time it takes to get a CT scan read by doctors and begin a treatment plan has decreased from 52 minutes to 39 minutes in a Stroke Care Network hospital. Clot-busting medication may reduce long-term disability, but is only available within a few hours of the first symptom.

In identifying [stroke symptoms](#), it's important to BE-FAST:

- Balance—does the person have trouble walking or standing?
- Eyes—are there any changes to eyesight, such as blurry vision?
- Face—do the eyes or mouth appear to be drooping?
- Arms—does the person complain of arm weakness?
- Speech—does the person slur their speech, or mix up words?
- Time—if any of those signs are present, it's time to call 911.

As with any medical issue, prevention is key. High blood pressure and cholesterol are two main risk factors for strokes. Engaging in regular physical exercise, quitting smoking, and cutting back on salty and/or fatty foods can make a big difference.

And if you or a family member show any of the above symptoms, call 911. It's better to have a false alarm than to delay any treatment.

Today is World Stroke Day – a day to reflect on the nation's #1 cause of death and disability and the steps you can take to help reverse that trend. Take preventive measures, know the symptoms, and BE-FAST if you suspect a stroke.

Provided by University of Kentucky

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