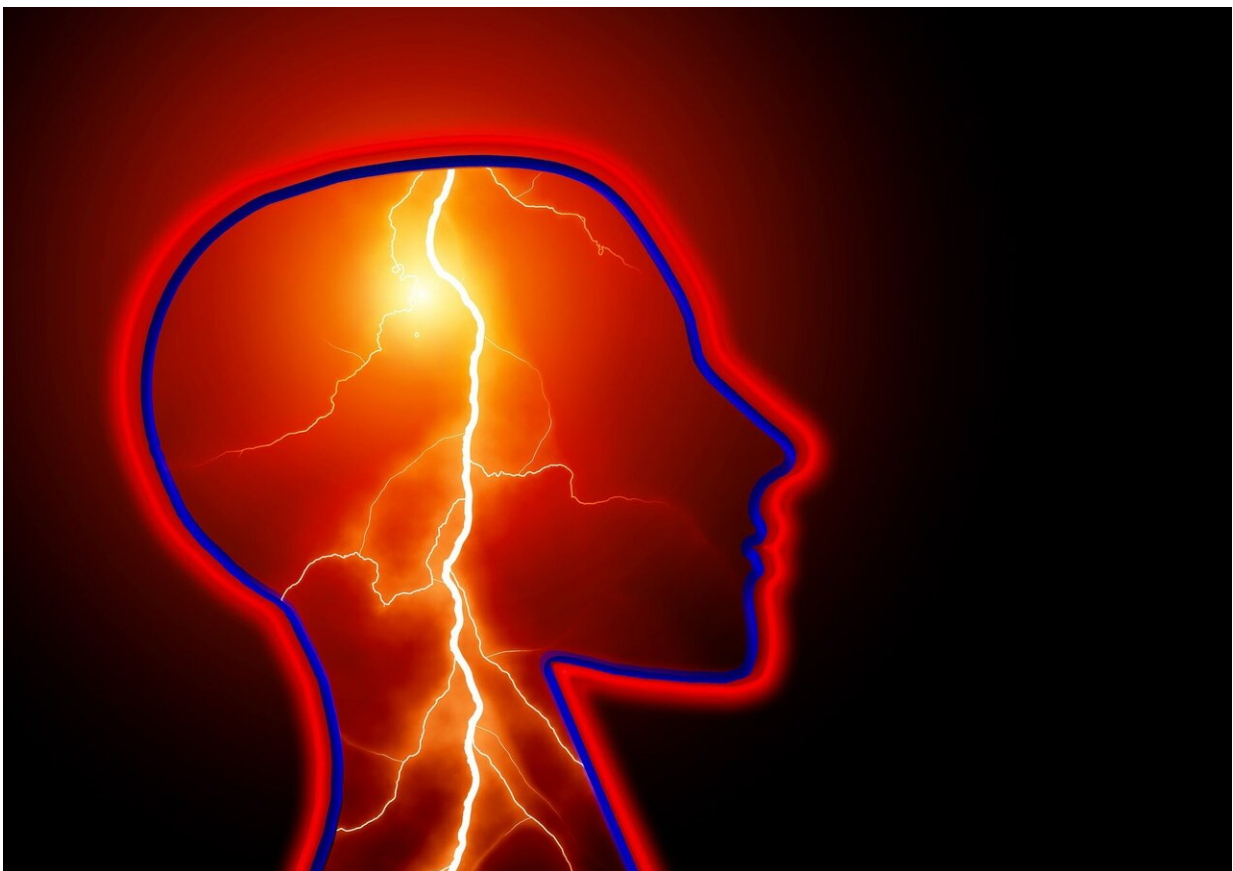


# Mayo Clinic Minute: Think FAST to recognize a stroke

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Stroke is the No. 5 cause of death and the leading cause of disability in

the U.S., according to the American Stroke Association. May is National Stroke Awareness Month.

If someone is suffering a stroke, every second counts. And the faster a patient receives treatment, the better the odds for a positive outcome.

Stroke symptoms often are characterized by a sudden inability to do something. And one way to recognize some of the key symptoms is the acronym "FAST."

"'F' stands for facial droop," says Dr. Robert D. Brown Jr., a Mayo Clinic neurologist. If you notice a sudden droop or paralysis in your face, or sudden difficulty seeing out of one or both eyes, it could be stroke.

"'A' stands for arm weakness," Brown says. Sudden weakness or paralysis on one side of the body—arm or leg—or difficulty walking can be a sign of stroke.

"'S' stands for speech slurring," he says. Sudden difficulty speaking or understanding others, perhaps even speaking unintelligible words, are all examples.

"'T' stands for time," says Brown. "If they see those symptoms occurring either in themselves, or a loved one or friend, they should seek emergency [medical care](#) immediately because every minute truly does count when there's a lack of blood flow to the [brain](#) or if there's been a hemorrhage into the brain tissue."

Recognizing these "FAST" symptoms and getting treatment quickly can minimize damage to the brain and lessen post-[stroke](#) complications.

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