Introduction

Every year October 29 is celebrated as ‘World Stroke Day’, initiated by the World Stroke Organization that carries the message that “Stroke is not only treatable but also a preventable catastrophe”. The theme for this year is “Face the Facts: Stroke is Treatable”, with the emphasis that lives can improve with better awareness, access and action.

About Stroke

A stroke, sometimes called a brain attack, occurs when blood supply is blocked by clot or bleeding occurs in the brain. In either case, parts of the brain become damaged often resulting in impairment in speech, movement and memory.

Signs & Symptoms

It is important to recognize symptoms, as prompt treatment is crucial to recovery. The five most common signs and symptoms of stroke are:-

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg.
- Sudden confusion or trouble speaking or understanding others.
- Sudden vision disturbance in one or both eyes.
- Sudden dizziness, trouble walking or loss of balance or coordination.
- Sudden severe headache with no known cause.

Transient ischemic attack (TIA) is a "warning stroke" or a "mini-stroke" where symptoms go away after a few minutes that results in no lasting damage.

Using the FAST test involves asking three simple questions:

How do you know if someone’s having a stroke? Think...

FACE
ARMS
SPEECH
TIME
**Face** - Ask the person to smile. Has their mouth drooped?

**Arms** - Can they lift both arms?

**Speech** - Is their speech slurred? Do they understand you?

**Time** - Is critical. If you see any of these signs call your doctor immediately.

**Risk Factors**

Anyone can have a stroke, but certain behaviors and medical conditions can increase its chances. Fortunately one can take several steps to lower the risk.

- **High blood pressure**: It can greatly increase risk for stroke.

- **High blood cholesterol**: Due to fatty deposits on blood vessel walls blood flow to the brain may be blocked causing a stroke.

- **Heart disease**: For example, coronary artery disease, valve defects, irregular heartbeat and enlarged heart chambers increases risk of clot formation and causes blockages.

- **Diabetes**: Having diabetes can increase your risk of stroke.

- **Obstructive Sleep Apnea** — a sleep disorder in which the oxygen level intermittently drops during the night.

- **Previous stroke or TIA**: If you have already had a stroke or a TIA, there is a greater chance that you could have a stroke in the future.

- **Overweight and Obesity**: Being overweight or obese can raise total cholesterol levels, increase blood pressure and promote the development of diabetes.

- **Tobacco Use**: Smoking injures blood vessels and speeds up the hardening of arteries. Secondhand smoke can also increase the risk of stroke for nonsmokers.

- **Alcohol Use**: Drinking too much alcohol raises blood pressure & increases triglycerides which can harden your arteries.

- **Physical Inactivity**: Not getting enough exercise can make you gain weight, which can lead to increased blood pressure, sugars and cholesterol.

**Prevention**

You can help prevent stroke by making healthy choices and managing any medical conditions you might have.
• **Eat a healthy diet.** Choose healthy meal options. Be sure to eat plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables.

• **Maintain a healthy weight.** Being overweight or obese can increase your risk for stroke. Normal BMI - 18.5 - 24.9

• **Be active.** It is recommended that you should engage in moderate-intensity exercise for at least 30-45 minutes on most days of the week.

• **Don't smoke & Limit alcohol use.** If you do smoke, quitting will lower your risk. Avoid drinking too much alcohol.

• **Monitor your blood pressure.** High blood pressure has no symptoms, so get it checked on a regular basis. Average normal BP is 120/80.

• **Manage your diabetes.** If you have diabetes, closely monitor your blood sugar levels. Talk with your health care provider about treatment options.

• **Stay Happy-** Positive behaviour reduces risk of diabetes, high blood pressure and heart diseases.

**Things to remember**

Stroke can happen to anyone at any age. Stroke affects everyone: survivors, family and friends, workplaces and communities.

Recognizing the signs of stroke early, treating it as a medical emergency with admission to a specialized stroke unit, and access to the best professional care can substantially improve outcomes.

Stroke affects us all. Let’s take action, drive awareness, and push for better access to stroke treatments.

*Every Day is a World Stroke Day. Act Now,*

*Be a Stroke Champion and a Torchbearer!*

**MEDICAL SECTION TIFR**