

## Stay ahead of stroke: BEFAST to save lives

Hindustan Times (Gurugram) · 29 Oct 2024 · 08 · Dr Praveen Gupta Disclaimer: The veracity of the claims made in this article is the responsibility of the hospital/ doctor concerned.

Stroke is the fourth major cause of death and fifth leading cause of disability in India.

When a stroke occurs, brain cells begin dying at a rapid pace of up to 1.9 million per minute, but early medical treatment can arrest this damage.

While anyone can suffer from a stroke at any moment, certain conditions raise the risk.

These include age (over 55), gender, ethnicity, family history, high blood pressure, smoking, diabetes, high cholesterol, obesity and sedentary behaviour. Though about 80% of all strokes are avoidable, it is critical to assess and mitigate the risks.

The sooner you are treated for a stroke, the better are the chances of full recovery. Recognising the BEFAST symptoms is the critical first step toward accessing these therapies.

### SIGNS OF A STROKE

Stroke symptoms are similar in men and women, although in women, they might be less severe and are sometimes overlooked.

General signs of a stroke include numbness in the face, arm or leg (particularly on one side of the body), difficulty speaking or understanding others, sudden confusion and mental foginess, sudden vision issues in one or both eyes, sudden dizziness, incoordination and difficulty walking, and sudden migraine headache.

### IDENTIFY A STROKE: BEFAST

**B – Balance issues** Someone is abruptly unable to maintain balance, gets dizzy, and struggles to walk. **E – Eyesight issues** Someone suddenly has blurred eyesight and sees double or dark.

**F – Face drooping of face.** One side of the face droops or feels numb.

**A = Arms feeling weakness** When asked to extend both arms, one may arm drift downwards.

**S – Speech difficulty** Someone may suddenly become slurred with their speech.

**T – Time to call for a stroke emergency right away** Take note of when any of the symptoms emerge as this will help medical professionals guide treatment immediately. More than 80% of strokes have at least one of the F.A.S.T. symptoms. Stroke can be treated and recovered with early recognition of the F.A.S.T message.

### IS IT POSSIBLE TO AVOID STROKES?

While not all strokes are preventable, several risk factors may be altered. High blood pressure is the most modifiable risk factor for strokes. You can minimise the risk by living a healthy lifestyle and controlling underlying medical issues.

Important actions in stroke prevention include regular exercise, a balanced diet, avoiding smoking and alcohol, managing stress, and lowering blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar levels.

Brain health can be prioritised effectively if you understand strokes, the risks, signs and symptoms, and preventions. Maintain a healthy lifestyle and make educated decisions.