

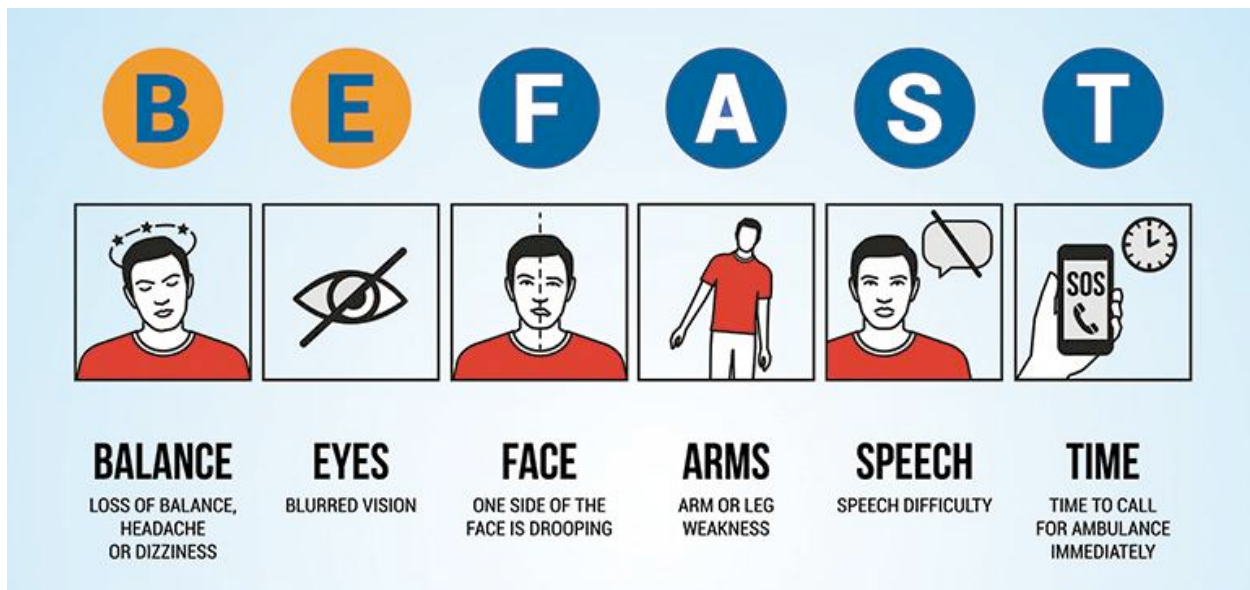
Stroke Awareness

Every year, almost 800,000 people in the United States have a stroke. Every 40 seconds, someone somewhere in the U.S. has a stroke, and every 4 minutes, someone dies of one. It's the leading cause of serious long-term disability, reducing the mobility of more than half of stroke survivors over the age of 65. While stroke risk increases with age, strokes can occur at any age, with people younger than 65 making up more than 30% of those hospitalized for strokes every year. The leading causes of stroke are high blood pressure, high cholesterol, smoking, obesity, and diabetes — if you have any of these conditions, talk to your doctor about what you can do to prevent stroke.

It's vital that everyone knows the signs and symptoms of stroke and is able to recognize one quickly. Strokes are treatable, but they must be treated immediately. The damage caused by a stroke can be stopped and in some cases even reversed, but the survivability of a stroke and the chances of emerging without serious deficits are a function of how quickly the victim reaches treatment. When it comes to strokes, time is brain.

Let me repeat that: TIME IS BRAIN.

The more time passes before you reach the hospital, the more damage may be done and the more likely it will be that that damage is permanent. This is why it's vital for all of us to BE FAST when it comes to recognizing the following symptoms.



What are you looking for, specifically?

Balance — Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, or loss of balance or coordination.

Eyes — Sudden trouble seeing out of one or both eyes (blurriness, blind spots, etc).

Face — Sudden facial droop on one side. You can test this by asking the person to smile, checking to see if the corners of the mouth move unevenly.

Arms (and legs) — Sudden weakness, numbness in, or difficulty moving an arm or leg (this is typically localized to one side of the body). You can test this by having the person lift their arms, watching to see if one doesn't move or moves slower than the other, then having them keep their arms out and close their eyes and watch to see if one arm begins to drift downward.

Speech — Sudden trouble speaking or understanding, confusion, slurred speech, or difficulty repeating simple phrases.

Time — Call 911 immediately. Do not wait or hesitate. Also, make a mental note of when the symptoms started — when is the last time you knew for a fact that this person was responding appropriately? The doctors are going to need this information in order to administer the most effective treatment.

NOTE: We tend to associate strokes with a sudden, extreme headache — often called a thunderclap headache. This is a symptom of some kinds of strokes (hemorrhagic strokes, essentially a brain bleed), which are often accompanied by nausea and vomiting, but 87% of strokes are a result of blood clots or other blockages of blood flow in the brain (ischemic strokes), and these do not always cause a headache. The only sign of an ischemic stroke may be one of the above symptoms of numbness or disability. So don't assume that no headache means no stroke.

Again: TIME IS BRAIN — if you or someone you're with is experiencing any of the above symptoms or has any other reason to believe a stroke is possible, you must call 911 immediately. The faster the possible stroke victim can reach the hospital, the better their chances.

The time thing is a real kicker when you're in Crystal Lakes, an hour from the nearest hospital. The quickest way we can get anyone assumed to be having a stroke to a hospital is to fly them out of here if weather conditions allow. This is not a cheap flight, and we don't want anyone to feel that they need to juggle financial concerns with concerns over their health or the health of someone they love. We certainly don't want anyone hesitating to call 911 for financial reasons at a moment when time is of the essence. Therefore, we encourage everyone who lives or spends time in the area to sign up for a membership with the AirMedCare Network (<https://www.airmedcarenetwork.com>). While we can't promise that the medical helicopter that comes up for any given emergency will be part of their network, the primary response helicopter for our area is in-network, making it a worthwhile bet, especially as memberships are relatively inexpensive and cover everyone who lives at the address you register (if you don't live in Crystal Lakes year-round, the address you register under should be your home address rather than your Crystal Lakes address). After seeing the kinds of things we do on a regular basis, most members of Crystal Lakes VFD have memberships, and we want our community to have the same information we have when it comes to deciding whether they want the same protection.

So remember: BE FAST, don't hesitate or delay, and be safe!