



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Stroke Prevention

World Stroke Day — October 29, 2014

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[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

Worldwide, strokes are the second leading cause of death among people over 60, and they are among the leading causes of disability. In the U.S., nearly 800,000 people suffer a stroke each year.

Dr. Sallyann King is a physician with CDC's Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention. She's joining us today to discuss ways to prevent strokes. Welcome to the show, Sallyann.

[Dr. King] Thanks, Bob.

[Dr. Gaynes] Sallyann, let's begin with what is a stroke?

[Dr. King] Well, as you probably know, arteries bring blood with oxygen and nutrients to your brain to help keep the brain healthy. A stroke typically occurs when something happened to block the blood supply and your brain doesn't get the oxygen and nutrients that it needs. Often this blockage is caused by a clot and it can cause part of the brain to die which then affects a person's ability to move and to talk.

[Dr. Gaynes] What are some of the risk factors for having a stroke?

[Dr. King] Some stroke risk factors are things that we can't change; things like age—you're more likely to have a stroke at an older age, gender or a personal or family history of having a stroke, but many risk factors we can change. Risk factors for stroke that we can change include things like high blood pressure. High blood pressure's especially important because it's the leading risk factor for stroke. Other changeable risk factors include things like high cholesterol; uncontrolled diabetes; being a smoker; excessive use of alcohol; eating an unhealthy diet, like a diet high in sodium; and physical inactivity.

[Dr. Gaynes] Sallyann, what are the most common symptoms of a stroke?

[Dr. King] The signs and symptoms of a stroke typically come on suddenly. People may experience sudden numbness in their face, arm, or leg; typically this occurs on one side of the body. They may have sudden confusion or difficulty speaking or understanding what people are saying. They may have sudden difficulty seeing in one or both of their eyes or trouble walking, with dizziness or lack of coordination. Some people also

experience a sudden, very severe headache and, of course, you'd want to call 911 if you saw any of these symptoms. Remembering the word "FAST" can sometimes help us recognize the signs and symptoms of a stroke—F-A-S-T. The "F" stands for face. Ask the person to smile and see if they're having some facial drooping. The "A" stands for arms. Have the person raise both arms and look to see if they're able to move them together or if one arm drifts downwards. The "S" is their speech. Here, you could ask the person to repeat a phrase, like "Mary had a little lamb" and see if their speech is slurred or sounds strange. And lastly—"T". "T" stands for time. If you see any of these symptoms, it's important to call 911 right away so they can get the life-saving treatment as soon as possible.

[Dr. Gaynes] What can we do to decrease our chances of ever having a stroke?

[Dr. King] To prevent a stroke, it's important to think about eating a healthy diet and controlling your weight and getting plenty of exercise. It's also important to work with your health care provider to make sure that your blood pressure and your cholesterol and your diabetes are all under control, and to get help with stopping smoking.

[Dr. Gaynes] What should we do if we think someone we know is having a stroke?

[Dr. King] If someone's having a stroke, you should call 911 immediately. As mentioned before, most strokes are caused by a clot in the brain, and there's a special clot-busting drug that can help improve the chances of recovering from a stroke but it *has* to be given within three hours of when the person started having the signs of a stroke. So it's especially important that stroke symptoms are recognized quickly and an ambulance is called to get people to the hospital quickly. And I want to mention one more thing about stroke. If someone has the symptoms of a stroke, they should *always* seek medical attention, even if the symptoms go away on their own. When the symptom resolve, we sometimes call this a "mini-stroke," but even when this happens, people are at especially high risk for another, and sometimes *much* bigger stroke.

[Dr. Gaynes] Sallyann, where can listeners get more information about stroke prevention?

[Dr. King] If you'd like more information about strokes, please visit cdc.gov/stroke. Women have other unique risk factors for stroke, and on October 29, 2014, for World Stroke Day, the World Stroke Organization is launching a global campaign around women and stroke. You can get more information at WorldStrokeCampaign.org.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Sallyann. I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Sallyann King about ways to prevent strokes.

Remember, if you or someone you know is exhibiting symptoms of a stroke, seek medical care immediately by calling 911. To see how you can decrease your chances of having a stroke, talk with your health care provider.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.