



## **A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC**

### *Preventing Strokes*

*National Stroke Awareness Month, May 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.

Strokes are the fourth leading cause of death in the U.S., and they don't just occur in older adults. Anyone can have a stroke at any age.

Dr. Mary George is a researcher with CDC's Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention. She's joining us today to discuss ways to decrease your chances of having a stroke. Welcome to the show, Mary.

[Dr. George] Thank you for having me.

[Dr. Gaynes] Mary, let's start with how many people have strokes each year in the U.S.?

[Dr. George] In the United States, nearly 800,000 people have a stroke each year, and as you said, stroke is the fourth leading cause of death.

[Dr. Gaynes] What are the symptoms of a stroke?

[Dr. George] Stroke symptoms usually occur suddenly, such as sudden difficulty speaking, sudden trouble seeing with one or both eyes, sudden weakness of an arm or a leg, sudden trouble walking, dizziness or loss of balance, or a sudden severe headache.

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

[Dr. George] Risk factors for stroke can be things that we can modify or change to decrease our risk of a stroke or things that we can't change. Risk factors that we can change include high blood pressure. About four out of every five people who have a stroke have high blood pressure. Also, high cholesterol, diabetes, tobacco smoking, excessive alcohol intake, lack of adequate physical activity, eating an unhealthy diet without enough fruits and vegetables or too much sodium. Risk factors that we can't change include things like age—the chances of having a stroke increase with age—and also our family history.

[Dr. Gaynes] What can people do to decrease their chances of having a stroke?

[Dr. George] Well, it's important to know that most strokes are preventable. People can reduce their chance of having a stroke by eating a healthy diet with plenty of fruits and vegetables, maintaining a healthy weight, get help to quit smoking if they smoke and not

starting to smoke if they don't already, getting plenty of exercise each week, and, if you have high blood pressure, you should work with your health care provider to control your blood pressure.

[Dr. Gaynes] Mary, if you think someone is having a stroke, what should you do?

[Dr. George] It's important to act fast. Getting treatment quickly is critical and you can remember this with the word "FAST." F-A-S-T. Is someone's face drooping? Is their arm or leg weak? Is their speech slurred or hard to understand? And "T" is for time. Remember to act fast and call 911 right away if you think someone is having a stroke.

[Dr. Gaynes] Where can listeners get more information about preventing strokes?

[Dr. George] They can go to [cdc.gov/stroke](http://cdc.gov/stroke).

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Mary. I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Mary George about ways to decrease your risk of having a stroke.

Remember, to decrease your chances, eat a healthy diet, maintain a healthy weight, exercise regularly, limit alcohol consumption, and control blood pressure and cholesterol.

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](http://www.cdc.gov) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.