



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Stopping Strokes

World Stroke Day — October 29, 2010

Recorded: October 19, 2010; posted: October 28,

[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC — safer, healthier people.

[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 third leading cause of death in the U.S. and among the top causes of disability. Most strokes result from decreased blood flow to the brain, and quick recognition and treatment can make the difference between life and death.

Dr. Mary George is a medical officer with CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. She's joining us today to discuss strokes and ways they can be prevented. Welcome to the show, Mary.

[Dr. George] Thank you for having me here today.

[Dr. Gaynes] Mary, what are symptoms of a stroke?

[Dr. George] Strokes occur suddenly. The most common symptoms of a stroke are numbness or weakness in the face, arms, or legs; confusion or trouble speaking or understanding; trouble seeing in one or both eyes; trouble walking, such as having dizziness, loss of balance, incoordination; or a severe headache with no known cause. Remember that these stroke symptoms commonly occur very suddenly.

[Dr. Gaynes] What is the fatality rate for stroke victims?

[Dr. George] Nearly 800,000 people in the United States have a stroke each year. There are two main types of stroke – ischemic stroke, which is the most common, and hemorrhagic stroke. The fatality rate for ischemic stroke is 10 to 12 percent in the first month after a stroke, and for hemorrhagic stroke, the fatality rate is 25 to 40 percent in the first month.

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

[Dr. George] Risk factors for stroke include things that we can't do much about, such as age – the risk of stroke increases with age, gender – men have greater rates of stroke than women, and family history, but there are many things that one can do to decrease the risk of having a stroke. Prevent and control high blood pressure, diabetes, and high cholesterol; not smoking; avoid heavy alcohol consumption; maintain a healthy weight; eat a healthy diet with plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables; and get plenty of physical activity. More than three out of every four people that have a stroke have a history of

high blood pressure. It's very important that people have their blood pressure checked and if they have high blood pressure, it's important to talk to their doctor about steps to control their blood pressure.

[Dr. Gaynes] How are strokes treated?

[Dr. George] The most common type of stroke is caused by a blockage in a blood vessel that supplies blood to the brain. In many people, this blockage can be treated with a clot busting medication called TPA, but it must be given soon after the stroke begins and the sooner it is given, the better the chance of a full recovery. After a stroke, rehabilitation is important to reduce disability and your doctor will provide medication to reduce the risk of having another stroke.

[Dr. Gaynes] Mary, if you see someone exhibiting the symptoms of a stroke, what should you do?

[Dr. George] If you suspect someone is having a stroke, don't delay. Call 9-1-1. Time lost is brain lost.

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

[Dr. George] They can go to www.cdc.gov/stroke.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Mary. I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Mary George about strokes and ways to prevent them.

Remember, risk factors for having a stroke include high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, and smoking. To decrease your chances of having a stroke, eat a healthy diet, including lots of fruits and vegetables, stay physically active, stop smoking, and limit alcohol consumption.

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, 24/7.