Stroke Education

What is a stroke?
A stroke happens when blood being supplied to the brain suddenly stops or when a blood vessel in the brain bursts. Brain cells then die because they no longer receive oxygen and nutrients from blood that is being carried to the brain by blood vessels. There are medications and lifestyle changes that can help to prevent a stroke.

Signs and symptoms of a stroke:

How to assess if a patient is having a stroke:
If a patient complains of numbness, weakness, or loss of control in part of their body you want to fully assess their function. Have the patient sit down if possible or lie down on a bed. It is best to assess the patient with a head to toe assessment.

Head:
- Ask the patient if they are able to state their name and date of birth. Ask the patient to close and open their eyes. Show the patient an object in the room (example: pen) and ask them to tell you what it is.
  - This will assess how alert the patient is and their ability to speak.
- Have the patient raise their eyebrows, smile, and show you their teeth.
  - This is assessing for any drooping or asymmetric movement of the face.

Arms:
- Ask the patient to use their right hand to squeeze two of your fingers. Ask the patient to raise their right arm up in the arm and hold it for five seconds. Ask the patient if they can feel you touching their right arm. Ask if they have any changes in the feeling of their right arm.
  - Repeat on the left arm.
  - This is assessing for any weakness or change in feeling in either arm.

Legs:
- Ask the patient to straighten their legs on a flat surface and to push against your hands like they are pushing down on a gas petal. Ask the patient to lift their right leg up in the air and hold it for five seconds. Ask the patient if they can feel you touching their right leg. Ask if they have any changes in the feeling of their right leg. Repeat on the left leg.
• This is assessing for any weakness of change in feeling of either leg.

**What are risk factors of a stroke?**

A risk factor is a condition or behavior that increases the risk of getting a stroke.

These risk factors **CANNOT** be changed to reduce the risk of getting a stroke:

1. Age  ➔ Increased age
2. Gender  ➔ Women higher risk
3. Race  ➔ African Americans highest risk
4. Family history

These risk factors **CAN** be changed or treated to reduce the risk of getting a stroke:

1. Hypertension or high blood pressure
2. Quitting smoking
3. Diabetes or high blood sugar
4. High cholesterol
5. Heart disease
6. Physical inactivity or obesity

**What can we do to prevent a stroke?**

- Limit daily salt intake
- Stop smoking
- Exercise daily/lose weight
  - 30 minutes of moderate exercise (walking) 5x week or 75 minutes per week of intense exercise (running)
- Increase daily vegetable and fruit intake, reduce fat and carbohydrate (breads) intake
- Reduce daily stress and get enough sleep (8 hours)
- Limit alcohol intake
  - One drink a day for women and two drinks a day for men
- Treat and monitor high blood sugar (BS)
  - BS goal fast (taken in the morning before food) less than 126
- Treat and monitor high blood pressure (BP), and irregular heart rates
  - BP goal less than 130

**What can we do if a stroke has already occurred?**

- Seek medical attention and call local emergency services if possible.
- When immediate medical attention is not possible, keep the patient in bed with the head of the bed higher than the feet. Keep the patient on their side if they are having trouble swallowing or coughing.


