

Signs help warn people of oncoming stroke

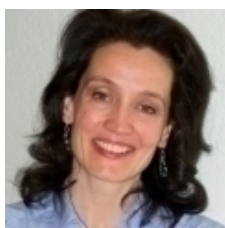
By Mandy Kendall

I met a lady the other day who, from all appearances, looked very healthy. What's so unusual about that you say? Well, two weeks prior to our meeting she had suffered a fairly major stroke. Fortunately for her she had received prompt medical treatment and made a full recovery.

So what is a stroke?

MedicineNet says, "A stroke, or cerebrovascular accident (CVA), occurs when blood supply to part of the brain is disrupted, causing brain cells to die."

The area of the brain that is affected by a stroke varies and will determine the side effects or symptoms the person experiences, but most commonly there will be some kind of paralysis or loss of function to the physical body, speech, memory, cognitive abilities etc.



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Now, there is good news and bad news about strokes.

The bad news is that strokes are the fourth leading cause of death in America and a leading cause of adult disability. The good news is that up to 80 percent of strokes are preventable with changes in lifestyle and health practices. Reducing blood

pressure and cholesterol levels are believed to be highly contributing factors in the reduction of deaths from strokes in the last decade.

Potential risk factors include: high blood pressure, cigarette smoking or exposure to secondhand smoke, high cholesterol, diabetes, being overweight or obese, physical inactivity, obstructive sleep apnea (a sleep disorder in which the oxygen level intermittently drops during the night), cardiovascular disease, use of some birth control pills or hormone therapies that include estrogen, heavy or binge drinking and use of illicit drugs such as cocaine and methamphetamines.

The bad news is that strokes are anything but rare with more than 500,000 people a year in America experiencing their first or even a recurring episode. The good news is that with today's medical care and technology a stroke's paralyzing and disabling effects don't have to be permanent, however the extent of recovery is hugely influenced by how quickly the stroke victim receives treatment and the first few hours are critical.

The bad news is that only 20 percent of U.S. hospitals are "stroke certified". The good news for those of us in Lake Tahoe and the surrounding area is that Renown Medical Center in Reno was one of the first hospitals in the country to receive this certification.

So, how do you recognize a stroke and what can you do about it?

Some of the classic symptoms include: sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm, or leg, especially if it occurs on one side of the body; sudden confusion, trouble speaking, or understanding speech; sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes, or double vision; sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance, or coordination; sudden severe headache with no known cause, drowsiness, nausea, or vomiting.

However stroke symptoms can also be less obvious than these and are often mistaken for something less serious.

So here are three *Qwik-e* tips on how to spot a potential stroke: (they use the acronym STR – as in STRoke)

S: Ask the person to SMILE.

T: Ask them to TALK and form a simple sentence (for example get them to tell you what day of the week and date it is) .

R: Ask them to RAISE both arms.

If a person has any difficulty in doing any of these three things, then it is time to call 911.

Until next time.

Mandy Kendall operates Health Connective in South Lake Tahoe, which aligns wellness seekers with their ideal wellness provider. If you have questions, would like some advice, or would like to request some Qwik-e tips on any health and well-being topic, drop her an email at connect@healthconnective.com or keep an eye out on Lake Tahoe News for regular Qwik-e tips on how to make healthy changes one Quick and Easy step at a time.