



AWARENESS

STROKE SIGNS AND PREVENTION

29th October is World Stroke Day. One in four people will have a stroke in their lifetime, according to the World Stroke Organization (WSO), yet in most cases, it can be prevented by taking immediate action.

Worldwide, stroke is the leading cause of disability and the second highest cause of death, reported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

What happens when someone has a stroke?

While most people who have a stroke are older, a stroke can happen to anyone of any age at any time. Explained by the Mayo Clinic, "a stroke occurs when the blood supply to part of your brain is interrupted or reduced, preventing brain tissue from getting oxygen and nutrients. Brain cells begin to die in minutes."

Two types of stroke that can affect a person:

1. Ischemic, the more common type, occurs as a result of blood vessels that supply blood to the brain becoming obstructed.
2. Haemorrhagic, which results due to blood vessels in the brain rupturing, hence internal bleeding.

Stroke Signs

The Mayo Clinic lists the following signs typically displayed when someone is having a stroke:

- Difficulty speaking or "trouble understanding what others are saying."

- Sudden "paralysis or numbness of the face, arm or leg," which often affects one side of the body only, e.g. one side of the mouth may droop when trying to smile.
- Vision problems, such as seeing double or blurred vision in one eye.
- The onset of a severe headache, sometimes accompanied by vomiting and dizziness.
- Loss of balance, coordination and trouble walking.

When someone is having a stroke, acting promptly is crucial to preventing brain damage and, or further complications.

The WSO states that "one should think FAST should you notice any warning signs." FAST stands for doing the following checks:

F– Face: Ask the person to smile and check whether their mouth is drooping.

A–Arms: Are they able to lift both arms?

S–Speech: Slurring of words, ask the person to repeat a simple sentence.

T–Time: Every minute counts, get help immediately.

Don't be "the one" that misses the signs. By remembering this simple acronym, you can help save someone's life, perhaps even your own.