



Department of Health
140 County Highway 33W
Suite 3
Cooperstown, NY 13326
Phone: (607) 547-6483
Fax: (607) 547-4385

May is Stroke Awareness Month

About every 60 seconds someone in the United States has a stroke. Every three minutes, one of these stroke victims dies. After heart disease and cancer, stroke is the third leading cause of death and is the leading cause of serious, long-term disability.

Nearly 30 percent of strokes happen to people younger than 65 years of age.

The Otsego County Dept. of Health wants people to know the benefits of learning the signs of stroke. Emergency room staff can administer new, effective treatments that limit the damage a stroke may cause, but those treatments must be started as soon as possible.

A stroke can be thought of as a "brain attack," similar to a heart attack. When it comes to warning signs of stroke, think F.A.S.T.:

- "Face": Is one side of the face drooping down?
- "Arm": Is one arm hanging down and/or unable to be lifted?
- "Speech": Is the speech slurred, confusing or is the person unable to speak at all?
- "Time": It's important to call 911 immediately if someone has any of these symptoms.

Because stroke symptoms are not necessarily painful, the warning signs often go unrecognized and people frequently do not seek emergency treatment. The difference between recovery and permanent disability may depend on how fast a stroke victim receives treatment.

To get the full benefit of treatment, it's important to get to the hospital within the first hour of experiencing any symptoms. There are new drugs that, if administered within three hours after the onset of stroke symptoms, can greatly reduce long term effects of the most common type of stroke.

A stroke occurs when a blood vessel bringing oxygen and nutrients to the brain bursts or is clogged by a blood clot or some other obstruction. This rupture or blockage keeps part of the brain from getting the oxygen it needs.

Stroke is largely preventable by practicing healthy lifestyle habits that also help reduce the risk and severity of heart disease. The Otsego County Dept. of Health recommends the following:

- **Control high blood pressure.** This is the single most important risk factor. Know your blood pressure and have it checked at least once every two years. It should be less than 120/80mm Hg.
- **Control Diabetes.** While diabetes is treatable, it still increases a person's risk of stroke. People with diabetes often have high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol and are overweight, increasing their stroke risk even more. If you have diabetes, work closely with your doctor to manage it.
- **Maintain healthy blood cholesterol levels.** Talk to your health care provider about what's right for you.
- **Take part in regular physical activity.** Being inactive or obese can increase your risk of high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, diabetes, heart disease and stroke. Go on a brisk walk, take the stairs and do whatever you can to make your life more active.
- **Maintain a healthy weight.**
- **Stop smoking.** Cigarette smoking is the number one preventable risk factor for stroke. Don't smoke or use other forms of tobacco. The nicotine and carbon monoxide in tobacco smoke reduces the amount of oxygen in your blood. They also damage the walls of blood vessels, making clots more likely to form. Smokers who use oral contraceptives have a higher risk of stroke.
- **Get regular medical check-ups.**

For more information, visit on-line at www.nyhealth.gov or call:

Otsego County Department of Health
140 County Highway 33W-Suite 3
Cooperstown, NY 13326
(607) 547-4230