

## Health Bulletin

### **What is a "Stroke"**

A stroke or "brain attack" occurs when a blood clot blocks an artery (a blood vessel that carries blood from the heart to the body) or a blood vessel (a tube through which the blood moves through the body) breaks, interrupting blood flow to an area of the brain. When either of these things happen, brain cells begin to die and brain damage occurs.

When brain cells die during a stroke, abilities controlled by that area of the brain are lost. These abilities include speech, movement and memory. How a stroke patient is affected depends on where the stroke occurs in the brain and how much the brain is damaged.

For example, someone who has a small stroke may experience only minor problems such as weakness of arm or leg. People who have larger strokes may be paralyzed on one side or lose their ability to speak. Some people recover completely from strokes, but more than 2/3 of survivors will have some type of disability.

### **Signs and Symptoms of a Stroke:**

These include:

Sudden numbness or weakness of face, arm or leg - especially on one side of the body.

Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding speech.

Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes (dimness or loss of vision).

Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination.

Sudden severe headache with no known cause.

If any person has experienced any of these symptoms, he may have had a TIA or mini-stroke.

If you think someone may be having a stroke, act F.A.S.T. and do this simple test:

### **Simple Test to identify a Stroke:**

Act - F. A. S. T.

FACE: Ask the person to smile.

Does one side of the face droop?

ARMS: Ask the person to raise both arms.

Does one arm drift downward?

SPEECH: Ask the person to repeat a simple sentence.

Are the words slurred? Can he/she repeat the sentence correctly?

TIME: If the person shows any of these symptoms, time is important.