Stroke: am I at Risk?

What is stroke?
A stroke, sometimes called a brain attack, occurs when a clot blocks the blood supply or blood vessels burst. It is the fifth leading cause of death and the leading cause of adult disability. Damage from stroke can affect the entire body resulting in mild to severe disabilities including the inability to move your arm, leg or both, and problems with thinking, speaking, swallowing, and emotions.

Am I at risk for a stroke?
A stroke comes on suddenly and can happen to anyone at any time. As you age, your chances of suffering a stroke increase, but even children, teenagers, and pregnant women can suffer a stroke. People who have heart disease, high blood pressure, or a prior stroke are at greater risk for having a stroke. African Americans, Alaska Natives, American Indians, and Hispanic adults are also at greater risk.

What are the common signs and symptoms?
- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm, or leg, usually on one side of the body
- Sudden confusion or trouble speaking or understanding others.
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes.
- Sudden dizziness, trouble walking, or loss of balance or coordination.
- Sudden severe headache with no known cause.

Why is stroke an emergency?
Every minute counts. The longer blood flow is cut off to the brain, the greater the damage. The treatments for stroke must occur within a few hours.

If you think that you or someone you know is having a stroke or you are unsure call 9-1-1 immediately.
What can I do to prevent a stroke?
Leading a healthy lifestyle can decrease your chances of stroke. Here are the action steps you can take to reduce your risk:

- Eat a healthy diet
- Exercise
- Keep your blood pressure, blood sugar, and cholesterol under good control
- Limit alcohol and smoking (quitting is better)
- Stop recreational drug use

Talk to your doctor or nurse about what you can do to prevent strokes.

Where can I learn more?

- Visit https://www.uhs.umich.edu/tobacco or contact MHealthy Tobacco Consultation Service at (734) 998-6222 to learn more about tobacco and smoking cessation programs available for you.
- Visit http://www.uofmhealth.org/conditions-treatments/nutrition or call 1-800-211-8181 to learn about Nutrition Services available at the University of Michigan Health System.
- Visit http://careguides.med.umich.edu/stroke to access patient education materials U-M stroke experts recommend.

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Adapted from: NINDS, What You Need to Know About Stroke and CDC, Know the Facts About Stroke

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