

## Spot a Stroke F.A.S.T.

Did you know someone who has suffered a stroke? My girlfriend, Tara, has a sister who suffered a stroke. It has forever changed their family. The month of May is American Stroke Month. It is important to learn two things that may save a life.

1. Know if you are at risk for stroke.
2. Know the stroke warning signs and what to do in a stroke emergency.

A stroke occurs when the blood supply to the brain is blocked or when a blood vessel in the brain ruptures, causing brain tissue to die. A stroke often starts as a sudden feeling of numbness or weakness on half of the body.

Stroke is the fourth leading cause of death in the United States and is a major cause of adult disability. About 800,000 people in the United States have a stroke each year. One American dies from a stroke every 4 minutes on average. Anyone, including children, can have a stroke.

The No. 1 stroke risk factor is high blood pressure. The Montgomery County Health Department will be doing free blood pressure screenings at the Health Expo. It will be held on Thursday, June 5<sup>th</sup> from 3:00 to 7:00 PM. at the Montgomery County Fairgrounds. It's important to check your blood pressure.

Stroke warning signs are important for everyone to know, because bystanders are often the ones who are able to recognize the symptoms and call 9-1-1. Do you know what to do if a stroke occurs?

You can help save lives and improve recovery by thinking F.A.S.T. These simple letters can help you recognize the signs of a stroke and get help right away.

### **F.A.S.T. stands for:**

**F – Face Drooping:** Does one side of the face droop or is it numb? Ask the person to smile.

**A – Arm Weakness:** Is one arm weak or numb? Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?

**S – Speech Difficulty:** Is speech slurred, are they unable to speak, or are they hard to understand? Ask the person to repeat a simple sentence, like “the sky is blue.” Is the sentence repeated correctly?

**T – Time to call 9-1-1:** If the person shows any of these symptoms, even if the symptoms go away, call 9-1-1 and get them to the hospital immediately.

Prevention is the best cure, but in the event of a stroke emergency, quick recognition and treatment may have a dramatic impact on the outcome. It could save a life, possibly yours. ■