Stroke: Am I at risk?

Q: After my father had his stroke, someone told me that I have a higher risk of having a stroke because of it. Is this true? If so, what are some lifestyle changes that I can make to try to reduce my risk? Also, what are some common symptoms of a stroke to look out for, just in case?

A: It is true that those with a family history of stroke have a slightly increased risk of having a stroke themselves.

There are some risk factors for stroke that you can't change:

- Heart disease, especially an abnormal heart rhythm called atrial fibrillation.
- Diabetes.
- High cholesterol.
- Obesity/low physical activity.
- Cigarette smoking.
- Heart disease, especially an abnormal heart rhythm called atrial fibrillation.

These are things you should work on with your physician's guidance. Your physician should monitor you for these conditions and then he or she can help to modify your risk with appropriate medications or an exercise plan.

Common symptoms of stroke include:

- Sudden numbness or weakness of face, arm or leg -- especially on one side of the body.
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding.
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes.
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination.
- Sudden severe headache with no known cause.

Another way to remember this is "FAST," which emphasizes the most common risk factors: Face Weakness, Arm Weakness, Speech Difficulty, Time to Call 911.
symptoms.

F = face (weakness or numbness)

A = arm (weakness or numbness)

S = speech (slurred, or difficulty understanding language or speaking)

T = time (time to call 9-1-1 -- treatment can only be offered in the first three hours after symptoms start)

Once symptoms start, it is important to call 9-1-1 because tPA (tissue plasminogen activator) can be given in the first three hours and can potentially reverse the stroke symptoms or make them better.

Please keep in mind that the risk factors and symptoms of stroke listed here are not comprehensive. For details about stroke, visit the NetWellness Stroke site and the U.S. National Library of Medicine's Stroke site.

Tags: Brett Kissela

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Posted by mayalooosh on 04/30/08 at 2:45PM

This is such an important matter. I found more stroke related info, and all of it is on video, here: http://www.sutree.com/Learn.aspx?q=stroke

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