

BRUSH UP ON THE SIGNS OF STROKE

September 14 – 18 is National Stroke Week and the Heart and Stroke Foundation SA (HSFSA) is urging all South Africans to be aware of the symptoms of a stroke. Approximately 60 people die every day in our country as a result of strokes! But, the good news is, a stroke doesn't have to be a death sentence.

A stroke happens when blood going to the brain, through the arteries, is stopped. Blood may be obstructed from moving through an artery because it is blocked by a blood clot or because the artery breaks or bursts. According to Director of Nutrition and Education, Shân Biesman-Simons, the Heart and Stroke Foundation SA, the most important thing is to recognise the early signs of stroke and get emergency help immediately. "Many stroke survivors can look back and see that there were some early warning signs," said Shân.

Knowing the signs of a stroke and seeking immediate medical help can improve the outcome of the stroke. The symptoms of stroke appear suddenly and often there is more than one symptom at the same time.

The symptoms of stroke include,

- Sudden weakness or numbness in the face, arm or leg on one side of the body
- Confusion
- Loss of speech, or trouble speaking or understanding speech
- Trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Unexplained dizziness
- Loss of balance or trouble with walking
- Severe or unusual headache
- Difficulty swallowing

When one or more of these symptoms is experienced, get immediate medical attention – medical help is most important in the first few hours. If the person becomes unconscious, call an ambulance immediately.

"Unfortunately, the problem is that most South Africans simply don't know what the signs of stroke are. If they did, they may have been able to avoid a stroke or achieve a better recovery, and that's what National Stroke Week is all about," explained Shân.

For further information consult www.heartfoundation.co.za or call the Heart Mark Diet Line on 0860 223 222.

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The Heart and Stroke Foundation SA

The Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa is a community-based organisation established to reduce the incidence of heart disease and stroke in the population of South Africa by providing education and supporting vital research. For further information visit www.heartfoundation.co.za