

Call 911 when Stroke Symptoms Strike

Stroke doesn't discriminate. Often called a brain attack - it can happen to anyone at any time. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), on average, one American dies from stroke [every 4 minutes](#). This makes stroke is the fifth leading cause of death in the United States, and a major cause of long-term disability.

When someone is suffering from a stroke, blood flow to the brain is blocked, causing brain cells to die. Every minute a stroke goes untreated, a patient loses nearly 2 million brain cells.

*****SOT*****

Leslie Cottrell, Regional Stroke Coordinator, OSF HealthCare Heart of Mary Medical Center

"Those are brain cells we don't get back. Those are brain cells that we need to function. There is an opportunity, if you've actually had a stroke, that we can decrease the swelling surrounding the area. But again, you have to get here quickly, we have to do the treatment, and we need to look you over to make sure that that doesn't get any worse." (:20)

The best chance for a patient to survive a stroke and have a full recovery is for him or her to get to the hospital quickly. However, according to the American Heart Association (AHA), [one in three stroke patients](#) doesn't call an ambulance when stroke symptoms start. Instead they may wait to see if symptoms go away or might try to drive themselves or have another person drive them to the emergency room.

According to Cottrell, calling 911 gets a patient the quick care they need on the way to the hospital, and alerts the hospital the patient is on the way.

*****SOT*****

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"Calling 9-1-1. Gets the ambulance there, gets all of those services there for you to treat you, and then they can call ahead. Calling ahead is probably the most important piece, because one thing we are going to do as soon as you get here is do a CAT scan. It's an imaging of your head, and when you come in by private vehicle you don't have that luxury of calling us to tell us that you're coming. When the ambulance calls ahead we can have that CAT scan suite open and ready for you." (:27)

Cottrell says many stroke patients who come to the emergency room via private car had believed that they could get to the hospital faster if they drove themselves or have a loved one drive them during the stroke. However, many end up regretting their decision.

*****SOT*****

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"We have a lot of spouses that say, 'I should have just called 911. I shouldn't have brought her in myself.' And we've had those cases where the patient has gotten worse in the car on the way here. And had they called 911, we would have licensed professionals there to help them through that." (:16)

Another major issue Cottrell sees is people often not recognizing the signs of stroke when they present. It has been found that one in three Americans doesn't know the signs of a stroke. This means many

cannot recognize when they, or someone else, is having a stroke. Cottrell says everyone should learn the warning signs and how to BE FAST for stroke.

An acronym has been created to make spotting a stroke easier: **BE FAST**. Call 911 if you or someone else has any of these symptoms:

- **Balance** – a sudden loss of balance or coordination
- **Eyesight** – sudden blurred or double vision or sudden, persistent vision trouble
- **Face** – one of side of the face droops down or the smile is crooked
- **Arm** – unable to lift an arm or keep an arm up without drifting down
- **Speech** – slurred speech, unable to correctly repeat a simple phrase, or unable to understand speech
- **Time** – it's time to call 911.