

## Time is Brain

"Time is Brain" is a phrase I found repeatedly while researching stroke. I think it is important for everybody to know the symptoms of stroke and a few simple field tests to identify those symptoms more specifically. Fast action can save lives and reduce incidence of disability.

During my earliest Reflexology training, we learned to recognize signs of stroke and act immediately. Keeping people conscious, by continuously stimulating the reflex area to the pituitary gland until they received medical attention, we were told, would help minimize damage to the brain.

However, my training started in 1984. At that time the standard medical procedure was to wait until the stroke was over and then, if the patient survived, assess the damage. The instructor told us that, since that was the all the medical doctors did, keeping the person conscious and the brain reflexes stimulated with reflexology could be the only chance a person had to avoid death or permanent disability.

Luckily, things have changed tremendously since 1984. With better understanding of stroke, new clot dissolving drugs and more extensive treatment methods for bleeding in the brain, doctors can now save lives and reduce disabilities from stroke, if the person is treated quickly.

Immediate medical attention is vital because, during a stroke, oxygen rich blood flow to the brain is blocked. Cells die rapidly when they lack oxygen and when brain cells die they cannot be replaced. Since the brain controls the rest of the body, losing brain cells means losing function somewhere else in the body.

Sometimes stroke symptoms can be very subtle and easily thought to be something else. Minor dizziness or loss of balance may not be minor. Always take a fall seriously try to determine the cause.

One system of recognizing a stroke is to remember the first three letters – S, T and R.

- Ask the person to Smile. Both sides of the face and mouth should look the same.
- Ask the person to Talk, to speak a simple sentence. Make sure they can pronounce the words correctly and in the proper order.
- Ask the person to Raise both arms. Both arms should have the same strength and movement.

If he or she has trouble with ANY ONE of these tasks, call 9-1-1 immediately and describe the symptoms to the dispatcher.

Another stroke identification instrument is the Face Arm Speech Test (FAST) that assesses the same three neurological signs of stroke:

- Facial weakness
- Arm weakness
- Speech disturbance

Another sign of a stroke is a crooked tongue so ask the person to stick out their tongue. If the tongue is crooked or if it goes to one side or the other, that is also an indication of a stroke.

Although stroke incidence increases with age, younger people can be at risk also. High cholesterol levels, heart disease, hypertension and diabetes are among the conditions that increase the risk of stroke.

If a friend or family member, of any age, exhibits any of the stroke symptoms including headache, mental confusion, inability to speak, loss of consciousness and paralysis, act immediately!

Remember, it could seem as innocent as a little "stumble and fall" but look for other symptoms of stroke using either of the tools listed above. Call 9-1-1 if you find any evidence.

I would rather be teased for the rest of my life for over reacting than lose any friend or loved one because I hesitated!

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