



The Doctor Will See You Now

A Stroke Victim Requires FAST Care

How to help a loved one live through this high-risk emergency



*By Dr. Nishiya Gandhi
Optum NM Neurologist*

Strokes, sometimes called brain attacks, are the fifth leading cause of death in New Mexico. For anyone experiencing a stroke, time is the most critical factor. Imagine if a stroke happened to a loved one, and you were the only one with them, what would you do?

What is a stroke?

A stroke occurs when the blood supply to the brain is blocked or when a blood vessel in the brain bursts. A brain attack can quickly damage brain cells and is a medical emergency. Depending on what parts of the brain are affected, the common signs of a stroke include:

- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes.

- Sudden numbness or weakness in the face or arms and legs, especially on one side.
- Sudden trouble walking, including dizziness or lack of coordination or balance.
- Sudden severe headache.
- Sudden trouble speaking or understanding.

Recognizing these symptoms, being aware that you are with a potential stroke victim and understanding that you must take action is critical and possibly life-saving. The longer the treatment delay, the more brain tissue may be lost. That's why it's important to call 911 immediately if you or someone you are with shows any signs of stroke.

How can you help?

F.A.S.T is an easy-to-remember acronym that serves as a quick test to determine whether someone might be experiencing a stroke and needs emergency care:

- **F** (Face) – Ask the person to smile

to determine if one side of their face is drooping.

- **A** (Arms) – Ask the person to raise both arms to determine if there is difficulty moving one side (e.g., one arm is drifting downward).
- **S** (Speech) – Have the person repeat a simple phrase to determine if their speech is slurred.
- **T** (Time) – If you notice even one of these signs, it's time to call 911 immediately.

No matter what, do not let the victim drive themselves. By calling 911 and getting paramedics on the scene as soon as possible, treatment can begin right away and continue during transport to a hospital or urgent care facility.

Can people recover from strokes?

People can recover from a stroke, but how well they recover varies widely. Rehabilitation periods can range from weeks to many months. While some people can fully recover, others may be left with long-term

disabilities. In all cases, stroke survivors typically will need ongoing love and support from family, friends and care teams. Vocational therapy is important as well, and the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, at nih.gov, provides a wealth of useful information to help stroke victims return to the workforce.

Post-stroke rehabilitation can also include:

- Physical therapy – helps people relearn simple motor activities such as walking, sitting, standing, lying down, and the process of switching from one type of movement to another.
- Speech therapy – assists people who have challenges understanding or producing speech, and also with swallowing issues.
- Occupational therapy – focuses on improving daily activities such as eating, drinking, dressing, bathing,

(continued on next page)

Healthier lives begin at Optum New Mexico

With 12 clinics in Albuquerque, Rio Rancho and Los Lunas, we are committed to keeping you healthy. From Medicare annual wellness visits to primary and specialty care, you can visit us for:

- Adult medicine
- Cardiology
- Diabetes education
- Family practice
- Ophthalmology
- Palliative care
- Podiatry
- Radiology
- Rheumatology



1-505-262-7000, TTY 711
nm.optum.com



Now accepting new Medicare and Medicare Advantage patients.

Accepted plans include Original Medicare, Humana, UnitedHealthcare and Blue Cross and Blue Shield.

