

## ***Washington Hospital Offers Free Stroke Awareness Day Screening***

Every 45 seconds, someone in the United States has a stroke, according to the National Institutes of Health. Could you be next? Are you at risk of having a stroke?

Know your own personal risk for stroke by attending Washington Hospital's Stroke Awareness Day screening from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, March 31. Registration is required for the free screening, which will be held at the Conrad E. Anderson, MD Auditorium at Washington West, 2500 Mowry Avenue, in Fremont. To register, call (800) 963-7070.

A stroke occurs when a blood vessel that brings oxygen and nutrients to the brain bursts or is clogged by a blood clot or some other particle. When this happens, part of the brain doesn't get the blood and oxygen it needs. Without oxygen, nerve cells in the affected area of the brain die within minutes.

"There are key risk factors that can lead to a stroke," says Dr. Ash Jain, cardiologist and Washington Hospital Stroke Program Medical Director. "We're doing the screening because it is critical to assess these risk factors so that patients can take proactive steps to prevent stroke." Stroke risk factors include high blood pressure, tobacco use, diabetes, carotid or other artery disease, high cholesterol, physical inactivity, and excess weight. The screening will check blood pressure, blood sugar, and blood cholesterol. An ultrasound test for carotid disease will also be provided along with information on reducing risk factors, including how to quit smoking. Strokes can be debilitating and deadly. When brain cells injured by a stroke can't work, the part of the body they control can't work either. Brain injury from a stroke can affect the senses, motor activity, speech and the ability to understand speech. Thought patterns, memory and emotions can be affected and paralysis or weakness on one side of the body is common. These effects can be temporary or lasting.

Warning signs of a stroke are a sudden numbness or weakness of the 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 or balancing; and a sudden, severe headache with no known cause.

### **Reduce Risk Factors to Prevent Stroke**

While stroke is a leading cause of serious, long-term disability, you are not powerless against it.

There are steps you can take to drastically reduce your risks of suffering from a stroke:

Stay on top of blood pressure. High blood pressure is the most important risk factor for stroke. Even if your blood pressure is normal, you should have it checked at least every two years. If it's high, you should get it checked more often.

Don't use tobacco. Tobacco use is still the number one preventable cause of death and disease, including stroke.

Be physically active. A brisk walk for as little as 30 minutes a day can improve your health in many ways. It can build endurance, control blood pressure, reduce cholesterol levels, aid in weight control, and reduce your risk of developing diabetes.

Eat a healthy diet. Include plenty of fruits, vegetables and grains and a moderate amount of lean protein. Foods high in saturated fat, trans fat and cholesterol contribute to heart disease and stroke. Consuming too much salt can cause high blood pressure in some people.

Watch your weight. A number of studies have shown that obesity dramatically increases your risk for stroke. It also compounds other risk factors because obese people tend to have high blood pressure and high cholesterol.

Control your cholesterol. A simple blood test can show your blood cholesterol level. If it is too high, dietary changes, exercise, weight loss and possibly even medication may be needed to bring it down.

Keep diabetes in check. Diabetes increases your risk of stroke. Keeping your blood sugar levels under control is critical.

To learn more about preventing strokes and your individual risk of having one, attend the screening on March 31 by calling Health Connection at (800) 963-7070.

For more information about Washington Hospital's Stroke Program, visit [www.whhs.com](http://www.whhs.com), click on the tab titled: "Services & Programs," select "Taylor McAdam Bell Neuroscience Institute," and then click on "Stroke Program" from the drop down menu.