

# STROKE FACTS

## Stroke

Stroke is the third leading cause of death and a major cause of serious long-term disability. A stroke occurs when a blood vessel in the brain gets blocked or ruptures. Blood carries oxygen to the brain. Without oxygen, brain cells die within minutes. Although brain cells can't be replaced, other parts of the brain can be trained to take over for the damaged area.

## Transient ischemic attack (TIA)

A TIA happens when blood flow to the brain is blocked for a short time. It may be a warning of a future stroke. The symptoms of a TIA are like those of a stroke and should NOT be ignored.

## Warning Signs of a Stroke

- 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, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- sudden severe headache with no known cause

DO NOT ignore these warning signs even if they go away. Call 911 or seek emergency medical attention immediately!

## Stroke Treatment

Immediate medical care is important. New treatments are available. These only work if given within a few hours after a stroke begins. For example, a clot-busting medicine can only be given within 3 hours.

## Reducing the Risk of Stroke

- Stop smoking and stop use of nicotine products.
- Control high blood pressure. Blood pressure should be below 120/80.
- Eat a healthy diet.
- Lose weight if needed.
- Exercise / walk for at least 30-45 minutes most days of the week.
- Control cholesterol. LDL (bad cholesterol) should be less than 100.
- If you have diabetes, work with your doctor to control blood sugar.
- Take all medicines as ordered by your doctor. Never stop taking medicines without checking with the doctor.

## If You Have Had a Stroke

Saint Joseph's Hospital has a specialized Stroke Team to treat you and monitor your progress. It consists of doctors, nurses with specialized education, pharmacists, speech pathologists, occupational and physical therapists, dietitians, chaplains and case managers. They will help arrange home care and rehabilitation as needed.

