

# Fired Up for Payson

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By, Vince Palandri, Fire Fighter, Payson Fire Department

### Stroke Warning Signs

When I heard the news that I was selected to be the new hire for the Payson Fire Department a few years back; I was to say the least, excited and unknowing. I had envisioned the flashing lights, red flames and as we have all seen on television, a chance to pull the lost child from that burning building. Well much to my surprise 75 to 80 percent of all emergencies we encounter are actually medically related. So with that in mind I have decided to digress from my normal articles that discuss fire and injury prevention, and discuss what we encounter and do the most. I would like to discuss over the next few months, topics that involve medical emergencies, their warning signs, emergency treatment procedures, and what to do in the first few minutes. I chose to discuss stroke as my first topic for no rhyme or reason other than it came to mind first. I hope over the next several months you find these articles helpful and hopefully this brings help to someone in the community, and I will swap that for the lost child and a burning building any day.

A stroke occurs when a blood vessel that carries oxygen and nutrients to the brain is either blocked by a clot or bursts. When that happens, part of the brain cannot get the blood (and oxygen) it needs, so it starts to die.

About 780,000 Americans each year suffer a new or recurrent stroke. That means on average a stroke occurs every 40 seconds.

Stroke kills more than 150,000 people a year. That's about 1 of every 16 deaths. It's the No. 3 cause of death behind diseases of the heart and cancer.

On average, every 3 to 4 minutes someone dies of stroke.

Of every 5 deaths from stroke, 2 occur in men and 3 in women.

Americans will pay about \$65.5 billion in 2008 for stroke-related medical costs and disability.

Some stroke risk factors are hereditary. Others are a function of natural processes. Still others result from a person's lifestyle. You can't change factors related to heredity or natural processes, but those resulting from lifestyle or environment can be modified with the help of a healthcare professional.

**If you notice one or more of these signs, don't wait. Stroke is a medical emergency. Call 9-1-1 or your emergency medical services. Get to a hospital right away!**

- 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

**Be prepared for an emergency.**

- Keep a list of medications and allergies in your pocketbook, wallet or purse. The Payson Fire Departments “Vial of Life” is great for this.
- Include phone numbers for relatives, friends, and physicians.

**Take action in an emergency.**

- Not all the warning signs occur in every stroke. Don't ignore signs of stroke, even if they go away!
- Check the time. When did the first warning sign or symptom start? You'll be asked this important question later.
- If you have one or more stroke symptoms that last more than a few minutes, don't delay! Immediately call 9-1-1 so emergency can quickly be sent for you.
- If you're with someone who may be having stroke symptoms, immediately call 9-1-1. Expect the person to protest — denial is common. Don't take "no" for an answer. Insist on taking prompt action.

*Therapy used on ischemic strokes can be effective within **three hours** of onset to slow or stop damage. In June 1996 the FDA approved tissue plasminogen activator (t-PA) as the first treatment for strokes caused by arterial blockages. This "clotbuster" is inserted into the femoral artery near the groin and then threaded up into the brain to directly dissolve the blood clot, thereby limiting or stopping the damage to the brain cells. *This therapy is used on ischemic strokes and effective within **three hours** of onset.**

New research studies show that women may have traditional symptoms less often than men do, and they may be more likely to experience and report an alternative symptom first. This discrepancy may cause women to delay seeking help. Don't wait. A woman coming into the emergency department with facial weakness is quickly sent off for brain imaging, but when the main complaint is shortness of breath or fainting, it may be that neither the woman nor even emergency room personnel immediately suspect a stroke

In addition to or instead of the traditional stroke signs, woman may also experience

- Loss of consciousness or fainting
- Shortness of breath
- Falls or accidents
- Sudden pain in the face, chest, arms or legs
- Seizure
- Sudden hiccups
- Sudden nausea
- Sudden tiredness
- Sudden pounding or racing heartbeat (palpitations)

**For further information on the prevention, causes, and treatment of stroke call the American Stroke Association at 1-888-4-STROKE or [visit their Web site.](#)**

**[www.strokeassociation.org](http://www.strokeassociation.org)**

Until next time be *"Fired Up"* about stroke prevention and treatment in your life.