

# Heart Disease and Stroke Facts: Signs and Symptoms of Stroke

## What is Stroke?

A stroke happens when blood flow to the brain stops because it is blocked by a clot. The brain cells in the immediate area begin to die because they stop getting the oxygen and nutrients they need to function.

## Stroke in Alaska

- Stroke was the 4<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death in Alaska in 2006<sup>1</sup>
- Stroke is also a leading cause of function impairments, with 15-30% being permanently disabled<sup>2</sup>
- Nearly 1/3 of Alaskans who have suffered a stroke report that their everyday activities have been limited because of that condition<sup>3</sup>

## Stroke is an Emergency! Minutes count!!

Rapid emergency medical care gives a victim the best possible chance of stroke survival and reversal of brain damage. Certain stroke treatments can be administered no later than (approximately) 3 hours from the time the stroke begins.

That's why it is **critical** to:

1. Know the signs and symptoms of stroke so you can **identify a stroke** in yourself or someone else early.
2. If you or someone around you shows one or more signs of stroke, **immediately call 9-1-1** or the emergency number in your area.

## Signs of Stroke

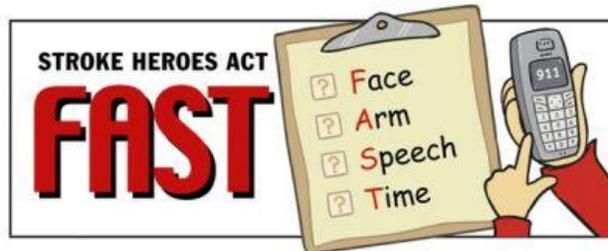
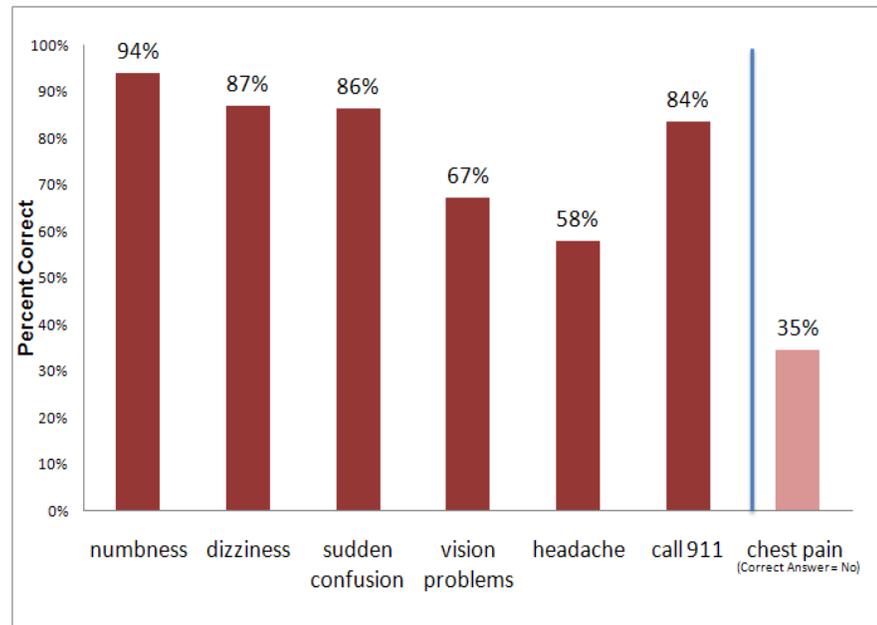
Here are the signs to look out for:

- Sudden confusion or trouble speaking;
- Sudden numbness or weakness of face, arm, or leg; especially one side;
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes;
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, or loss of balance;
- Severe headache with no known cause.

## Alaskans' Awareness of Stroke Signs & Symptoms

- In 2002, Alaskan adults were asked to identify stroke signs and symptoms (see chart).<sup>4</sup>
- 16% of Alaskan adults correctly identified all stroke signs and reported they would call 9-1-1 as a first response.<sup>4</sup>

## Percentage of Alaskans Who Correctly Identify Stroke Signs & Symptoms. Alaska BRFSS (2002)



F.A.S.T stands for face, arms, speech and time, and is being used as an easy way for everyone to recognize the signs of stroke:

**F**acial weakness - can the person smile? Has their mouth or eye drooped?

**A**rm weakness - can the person raise both arms?

**S**peech difficulty - can the person speak clearly and understand what you say?

**T**ime to act fast - call 9-1-1 immediately.

**Recent data show that Anchorage bus rider awareness of stroke signs and symptoms increased significantly after F.A.S.T campaign signs were placed within Anchorage's PeopleMover bus system.<sup>5</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics; <sup>2</sup>American Heart Association. *Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics-2004 Update*. <sup>3</sup>Alaska Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2005; <sup>4</sup>The Burden of Heart Disease and Stroke in Alaska: Mortality, Morbidity, and Risk Factors, available at: [http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/chronic/chp/pubs/burden\\_Dec09.pdf](http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/chronic/chp/pubs/burden_Dec09.pdf); <sup>5</sup>Andrea Fenaughty, Epidemiologist – State of AK DHSS, 2009.