

Do you know how to lower your risk of stroke?

The Stroke Association has launched a Wales-wide campaign aimed at reducing the number of strokes across the country.

Three specific risk factors put people at an increased risk of having a stroke. The charity's *Lower your risk of stroke* campaign will raise awareness of the number of strokes caused by high blood pressure, Atrial Fibrillation (AF) and Transient Ischaemic Attacks (TIAs), also known as mini-strokes.

Ana Palazón, Director Cymru of the Stroke Association, said:

“By taking action on three of the biggest stroke risk factors, we could reduce the number of strokes across Wales by up to 50%. We are asking people to do three simple things:

- Get their blood pressure checked once a year
- Check their pulse for any irregularity
- Seek medical attention immediately should they experience any stroke symptoms such as facial weakness, arm weakness or slurred speech.”

High blood pressure is one of the biggest risk factors for stroke, contributing to 54% of strokes. High blood pressure does not have any symptoms so the only way to know if you have it is to have your blood pressure measured regularly.

Atrial Fibrillation (also known as AF) is the most common heart disorder in Wales. People living with AF are five times more likely to have a stroke and strokes caused by AF are more likely to lead to death, or leave the survivor with high levels of disability.

The third biggest risk factor is a **Transient Ischaemic Attack** which happens when the brain's blood supply is interrupted for a short time only. Although the symptoms may not last long, a TIA is still very serious. It's a sign that a person is at risk of going on to have a stroke. That is why a TIA is often called a warning stroke yet too many people are unaware of the link between TIA and stroke and they are not getting the services and support they need. Often, people dismiss the symptoms of a TIA as a “funny turn”; however doing so could endanger life as more than 25% of people who have a stroke have had a previous stroke or TIA.

All stroke symptoms should be treated seriously, no matter how quickly they pass. People should look out for facial weakness or drooping, loss of mobility down one side or problems with speech.

The Act FAST message is vitally important; Face, Arm, Speech and Time to call 999. The sooner people get medical help, the better their outcomes and the lesser their disability. Don't ignore funny turns, call 999 immediately.

Top 5 things we want you to do:

1. Get your blood pressure and pulse checked.
2. Learn the FAST test.
3. Share the FAST test with your friends, family and co-workers.
4. Show your support for the campaign by using the hashtags #StrokeRisk and #Lleihaustroc on your social media channels.
5. Show your support for the campaign by sharing and retweeting the Stroke Association's social media posts on Facebook and Twitter.

For more information about the campaign contact the Stroke Association on 02920 524400 or email info.cymru@stroke.org.uk.

If stroke has affected you or a family member please ring the Stroke Association's helpline on 0303 3033 100.