

# Check your stroke risk

In honor of National Stroke Awareness Month, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment encourages Kansans to learn the risk factors, signs and symptoms of a stroke.

In 2009, stroke was the fourth leading cause of death in Kansas. Prompt access to medical care is crucial for preventing death and disability from stroke. The initial step in accessing medical care is recognizing the signs and symptoms of a stroke as it occurs and calling 911. Only 23 percent of Kansas adults could correctly recognize all signs and symptoms of a stroke and the appropriate response to call 911.

“Stroke is a medical emergency that can cause permanent disability and death,” said Dr. Robert Moser, Secretary, Kansas Department of Health and Environment. “More than half of stroke deaths occur before the person reaches a hospital, clinic or medical facility. Fortunately, this can be prevented if medical care is accessed without delay.”

The chance that you will survive and recover from a stroke is higher if you get emergency treatment right away. If you notice any signs of a stroke, call 911 immediately. The following are signs of stroke:

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of 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.

Anyone can have a stroke, so it is important to understand the risk factors that can lead to it. There are certain risk factors beyond your control, including age, gender, ethnicity and family history, but fortunately, most behaviors and medical conditions that increase stroke risk can be prevented or controlled.

Quitting smoking, limiting al-

cohol use, being physically active, eating a healthy diet, maintaining a healthy weight and controlling high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes are some of the ways to reduce your risk of having a stroke. High cholesterol, high blood pressure, heart disease and diabetes are risk factors that can be controlled and managed with the help of a healthcare professional.

“If you have risk factors for stroke, it is important to make healthy lifestyle choices and manage any medical conditions you may have, said Moser. “Have your cholesterol tested at least once every five years and monitor your blood pressure on a regular basis. If you have diabetes, closely monitor your blood sugar levels. Take time to talk with your health care provider about treatment options.”

For information on stroke, contact the Kansas Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Program at (785) 291-3195.

## Storage tips keeps berries fresh

Plump, juicy strawberries are a sure sign of spring. If not properly stored, however, they may spoil more quickly than we would like, said Karen Blakeslee, K-State Research and Extension food scientist.

“Strawberries typically fare best when covered and refrigerated below 40 degrees F ...but not at freezing or below,” she said.

Storing strawberries in the store containers with the snap-tight lids, a re-sealable plastic bag or other food storage container with a lid is recommended, said Blakeslee, who also recommends storing strawberries in a crisper drawer of the refrigerator to hold humidity.

If stored in the refrigerator compartment, frost-free technologies can zap the moisture out of the

berries, she said. Strawberries can last up to seven days when stored correctly. Strawberries do not continue to ripen after they are picked, so if overripe when picked, they’ll not likely last as long.

Blakeslee advised waiting to wash strawberries until ready to serve and eat them, and recommended washing the berries with cool running water or placing them in a strainer and spraying them with cool water.

If excess dirt remains, she suggested holding the berry under cool running water and rubbing the dirt off gently with a finger.

If leftovers remain, she advised covering and refrigerating the prepared berries and using them within 24 hours.

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