What is a stroke?
A stroke is a sudden loss of brain function. This is due to a change in the blood flow to the brain. Cerebral vascular accident or CVA is another name for a stroke.

What causes a stroke?
- **Thrombus** is a clot that forms on the wall of a blood vessel in the brain. The clot stops the flow of blood.
- **Emboli** is a clot in a blood vessel that moves to the brain where it blocks blood flow.
- **Hemorrhage** is bleeding that causes pressure on the brain’s cells.

What are the effects of a stroke?
The effects of a stroke depend on the location in the brain and amount of damage to the brain. There may be changes in behavior or in your ability to do daily activities.

**Damage to the right side of the brain may cause:**
- Loss of movement to the left side of the body, called hemiplegia
- Quick and impulsive behavior
- Problems with memory
- Lack of attention to where the left side of the body is positioned (neglect)
- Problems with swallowing
- Problems with remembering how to do daily activities
- Problems with language

**Damage to the left side of the brain may cause:**
- Loss of movement to the right side of the body, called hemiplegia
- Problems with talking and understanding or aphasia
- Slow and cautious behavior
- Problems with remembering how to do daily activities
- Problems with swallowing
- Lack of attention to where the right side of the body is positioned, called neglect
What are the factors which may lead to a stroke?

- High blood pressure
- Stress
- Diabetes
- Heart disease
- Smoking
- Diet too high in cholesterol and fat
- Too much alcohol
- Family history of stroke
- Previous strokes
- Drug abuse
- Obesity
- Lack of exercise
- Atrial fibrillation

What are the warning signs of a stroke?

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm, or leg, most often 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

Call 911 if you have any signs of a stroke.

What can you do to help prevent a stroke?

- Visit your doctor regularly to check your blood pressure, blood sugar, and cholesterol.
- Take medicines as ordered. Do not change or stop taking your medicine without talking to your doctor.
- Quit smoking or using other tobacco products.
- Lower your stress level by using relaxation exercises and recreation.
- Follow a low cholesterol, low fat diet.
- Exercise regularly at least 3 times per week.
- Avoid alcohol and drugs.
- Keep your weight at the right amount for your height.
- Keep your blood sugar in the recommended range if you have diabetes.
- Be aware of your family history.
- See your doctor if you have any of the warning signs.

Talk to your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

For more health information, contact the Library for Health Information at 614-293-3707 or e-mail health-info@osu.edu.

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