

This information is forwarded by the **Love Thy Neighbor Ministry** at Saint Rose of Lima Catholic Church, Milton FL.  
Source of Information: The Catholic Foundation of Northwest Florida. Due to the many references, some may not be current but have many useful reference sources. Emails are sent using the Blind Carbon Copy (BCC) method.

This quality of life series focuses primarily on senior citizens plus other supplemental information. You do not have to be a Senior to make use of this information. If you know of a Senior, a parishioner or a neighbor who could use this information you are invited to give them a copy of this email. Fellowship through improved communications is guided by the second greatest commandment. Sometimes an act of kindness can be as simple as a phone call, a visit, or receipt of an email.

**Suggestion: Create a separate folder of this information for ease of future reference.**

For information about our Parish, click on the following link: <http://parishesonline.com/scripts/HostedSites/Org.asp?ID=14423>

**Our parish spirit is rising, is rising.**

Stroke Alert

[http://www.legacygifts.org/savvy\\_senior.jsp?WebID=GL2004-0129&D=200736](http://www.legacygifts.org/savvy_senior.jsp?WebID=GL2004-0129&D=200736)

Dear Savvy Senior,

What are the risk factors and symptoms of a stroke? My 74-year-old father had a stroke a few months ago and neither he nor my mom had a clue what was happening. What can you tell us?

Caretaking Karen

Dear Karen,

Stroke is the third leading cause of death in the United States and the number one cause of disability, yet many Americans can't name a single stroke symptom. Here's what you should know.

### **What is a Stroke?**

Every year, around 750,000 Americans suffer a stroke. A stroke happens when a blood vessel that supplies blood to the brain is suddenly blocked by a clot (ischemic stroke), or a burst (hemorrhagic stroke) causing brain damage. About 80% of strokes are ischemic. But the good news is that most strokes can be prevented by knowing and controlling the risk factors.

### **Stroke Factors**

There are many factors (some you can't change and some you can) that increase your risk for stroke.

Age: The risk of stroke doubles each decade after age 55.

Gender: Men are more likely to have a stroke, but women are more likely to die of one.

Race: African Americans and Hispanics have a higher risk than those of other races.

Family history: If your parents or siblings have ever suffered a stroke, you're at twice the risk of having one, too.

Previous stroke: If you've already had a stroke or a mini-stroke, you have a 25-40% chance of having another stroke in the next five years.

High blood pressure: Left untreated, high blood pressure (140/90 or higher) is a leading cause of stroke. Work with your doctor to keep your blood pressure under control.

Smoking: If you smoke - quit. Smoking doubles the risk of stroke.

**High cholesterol:** High levels of cholesterol can clog arteries and cause a stroke or heart attack. High cholesterol can usually be controlled with diet, exercise and medication.

**Diabetes:** The risk of stroke doubles in people with diabetes. There are more than 5 million Americans with type 2 diabetes and don't know it. Get tested!

**Atrial fibrillation:** 3 to 5% of people over 65 have atrial fibrillation, a heart rhythm disorder that increases stroke risk. Find out from your doctor if you have it.

**Obesity:** Being overweight increases your chance of developing high blood pressure, atherosclerosis and diabetes - all of which increase stroke risk.

**Alcohol:** While one or two drinks a day slightly reduces risk of stroke, excessive drinking (more than three drinks a day) increases risk.

## **Screenings**

If you're over the age of 60 or have other risk factors, getting screened for vascular diseases is a smart way to help prevent a stroke. Here are some convenient services you should know about.

**Legs for Life:** A public education national screening program that provides free vascular screenings (throughout September) at hundreds of hospitals and clinics across the country but require an appointment. See [www.legsforlife.org](http://www.legsforlife.org) to find a screening site near you.

**Society for Vascular Surgery:** Offers free screenings at around 150 sites nationwide. See [www.vascularweb.org](http://www.vascularweb.org) or call 800-258-7188.

**Life Line Screening:** A private company that offers screening tests for \$45 at 14,000 sites nationwide. Call 800-697-9721.

## **Stroke Symptoms**

Every minute counts when it comes to treating a stroke. Clot-dissolving drugs used to treat ischemic strokes can save lives and greatly reduce disability, if given within three hours after symptoms appear. If you're having symptoms, or see someone else having symptoms of a stroke, call 911 immediately. Symptoms include:

Sudden numbness, weakness, or paralysis of the face, arm, or leg on one side of the body.

Sudden vision problems in one or both eyes, such as dimness, blurring, double vision, or loss of vision.

Unexplained dizziness, loss of balance or trouble walking.

Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding.

Severe headache with no known cause, possibly accompanied by vomiting.

**Savvy Notes:** Mini-strokes (temporary blockage of blood flow to the brain) fool a lot of people because the symptoms (similar to a full-blown stroke) go away. But recognizing them and seeking medical help is crucial because mini-strokes are strong predictors of a more serious stroke to come.