

What should you do if you recognise signs of stroke?

Novel treatment options for stroke include a clot dissolving drug called recombinant tissue plasminogen activator (rTPA) and an intervention to remove the clot (thrombectomy). This can only be administered at hospital if the patient arrives within 6 hours of onset of stroke. The earlier the presentation to hospital, the better the outcome from the stroke.

Therefore it is important to identify stroke warning signs and get to hospital fast. **TIME IS BRAIN.**

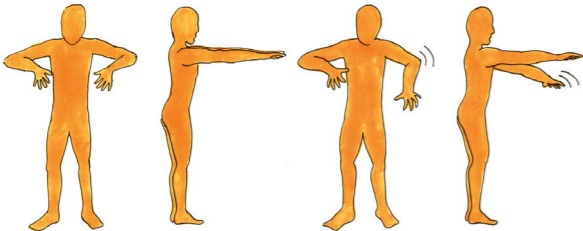
The FAST test will help you remember and recognise the signs:

F
FACE



Does one side of the face droop? Ask the person to smile.

A
ARMS



Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downwards?

S
SPEECH



Is the speech slurred? Ask the person to repeat simple sentences.

T
TIME



Act Fast. Dial 112 immediately.

Stop Stroke Fast

Sources of information:
www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stroke
AHA/ASA guidelines for the primary prevention of stroke
www.euro.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets
DHIR National Mortality Register

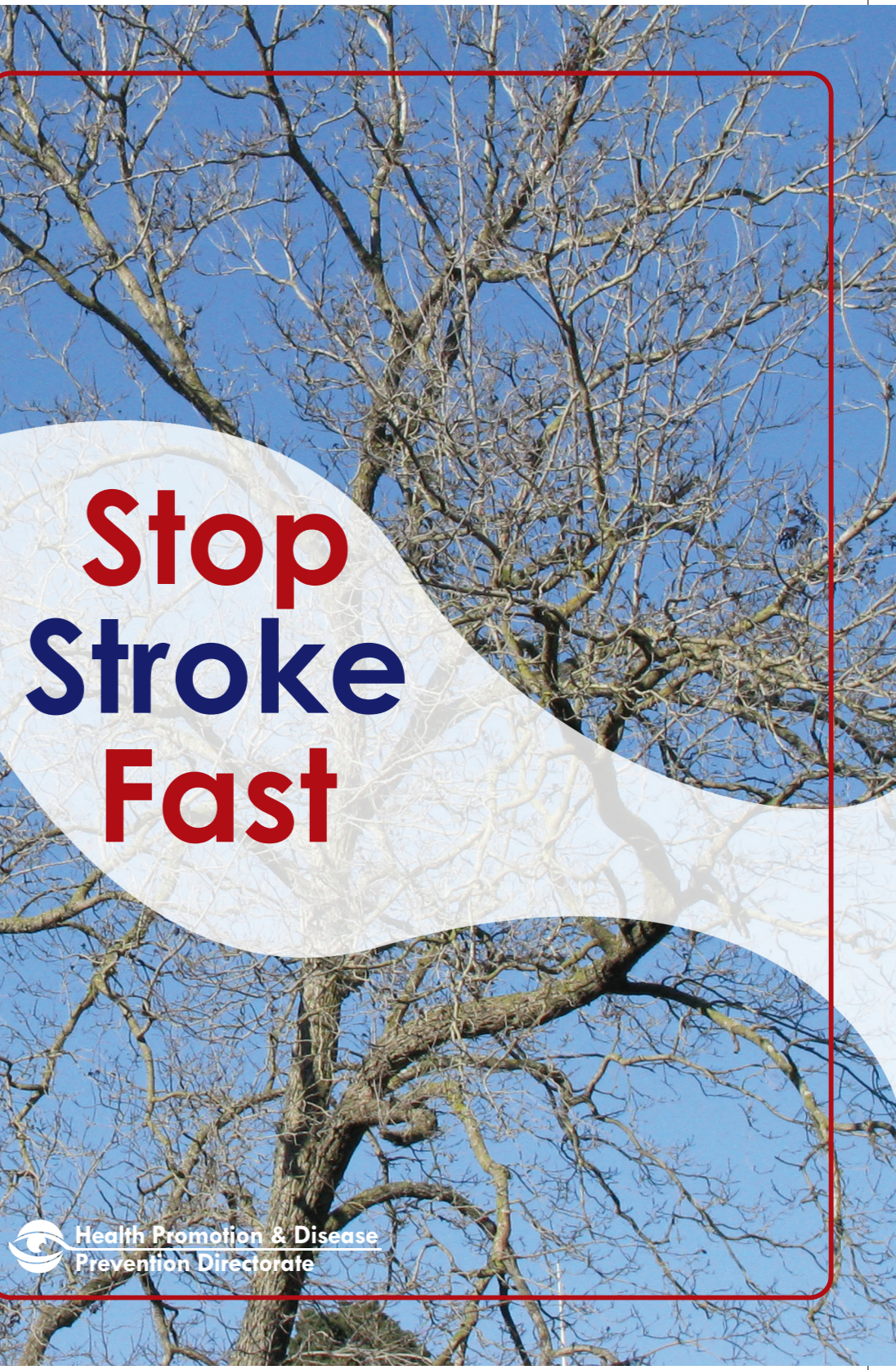
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 **PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIAT FOR HEALTH**



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 **Health Promotion & Disease Prevention Directorate**

What is stroke?

For the brain to function, it needs a constant blood supply which provides oxygen **and vital nutrients to the brain cells**. **A stroke occurs when the blood supply to part of the brain is cut off** due to a blood clot blocking the artery or when a blood vessel bleeds into the brain tissue.

Strokes are sudden and have an immediate effect. They are a leading cause of long term disability. In 2010 stroke accounted for 8.7% of deaths in Malta. There were 615 people who were admitted to hospital with a stroke in Malta and Gozo in the year 2011. Stroke is also the second leading cause of death in the Western world.

Depending on the area of the brain that is affected, people suffering a stroke may:

- Become numb, weak or paralysed on one side of the body
- Have slurred speech
- Find it difficult to talk or understand what is being said
- Lose sight or have blurred vision
- Become confused
- Become unsteady when walking



Stop Stroke Fast

What are the risk factors for stroke?

A Some risk factors cannot be modified by medical treatment or lifestyle changes:

Age Gender Family History Ethnicity/race

B However other risk factors can be modified. These can be split into:

Medical Risk Factors	Lifestyle Risk Factors
High blood pressure	Smoking
High cholesterol levels	High alcohol consumption
Diabetes	Unhealthy diet
Heart disease	Physical inactivity
	Obesity



Stop Stroke Fast

How can you reduce your risk of stroke?

- 1 A balanced diet**
 Follow a diet low in saturated fats and cholesterol and high in dietary fibre
 - include plenty of fresh vegetables and fruits
 - avoid adding salt to food during its preparation or at table
 - avoid processed foods that are high in salt
 - read food labels to help you choose foods that are low in salt, fat and sugar
- 2 Be active**
 30 minutes for at least five days per week of moderate intensity activity (such as brisk walking or riding a bike at ground level) or 75 minutes per week of vigorous intensity activity (such as aerobics) are WHO recommended levels. Some physical activity is better than none. Any amount of physical activity gives you health benefits. Physically active people generally have a 25-30% lower risk of stroke or death than the least active people.
- 3 Do not smoke**
 Smoking doubles your risk for stroke. Smoking cessation is also associated with a rapid reduction in the risk of stroke to a level that approaches but does not reach that of those who never smoked.
- 4 Minimise intake of alcohol**
 Heavy drinking multiplies the risk of having a stroke by more than three times. One gram of alcohol is equivalent to seven kcal and therefore may lead to weight gain.
- 5 Simple checks at your Family Doctor**
 Regular measurement of blood pressure, cholesterol levels, blood glucose levels, weight, waist circumference and Body Mass Index (BMI) can help you be aware of any risk factors in time to do something to control them.
- 6 Treatment for any medical condition predisposing to stroke**
 If you are suffering from any medical condition (for example, high blood pressure) take your medications regularly as prescribed by your doctor.

The risk factors above can be controlled successfully. By starting early and controlling your risk factors, you can lower your risk of death and disability from stroke.

Stop Stroke Fast