



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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Department of Health launches “BE FAST for Stroke” campaign to identify the signs of stroke and the importance of calling 9-1-1 immediately

HONOLULU – The Hawai'i Department of Health (DOH) recently launched a new public service announcement campaign identifying the common signs of stroke and importance of calling 911 immediately, especially since stroke care starts in the ambulance.

Stroke is the number one cause of chronic disability and the third leading cause of death in Hawai'i. Stroke was responsible for 943 deaths statewide in 2021 and has been rising annually since 2016 when 675 lives were lost to this serious medical condition. A stroke occurs when blood flow through an artery to the brain is cut off — either by a blockage or because the artery ruptures and bleeds into the brain tissue. People are experiencing strokes at increasingly younger ages each year. Strokes are a serious medical emergency and must be treated right away.

“Doctors have a greater chance of successfully treating a stroke patient if treatment is started in the first 60-90 minutes of a stroke. That is why patient transportation by ambulance is important,” said Dr. Matt Koenig, neurointensivist at The Queen's Medical Center, during the December 2022 Hawaii Stroke Coalition Symposium. “Every minute that goes by, you're losing about two million brain cells. Don't overthink things like, ‘Can I drive faster to the hospital myself?’ Don't drive to the hospital, and don't wait. Instead, call 911. Stroke care starts in the ambulance.”

Common signs of a stroke can be remembered by the acronym “BE FAST”:

B - Balance loss. Is there a sudden loss of balance or dizziness?

E - Eyesight problems. Is the person experiencing sudden loss of vision in one or both eyes, blurriness or double vision?

F - Face drooping. Is one side of the person's face drooping or uneven?

A - Arm weakness. Is the person experiencing weakness or numbness in one arm or is unable to raise both arms?

S - Speech difficulty. Is the person's speech slurred or hard to understand?

T - Time to call 9-1-1. Call 911 immediately if someone suddenly has one or more of these stroke signs.

Danny de Gracia, a DOH program specialist whose family member is a stroke survivor, said, “My mother survived her stroke and fully recovered because we called for an ambulance the moment she started to show signs of a stroke. I know friends who, when their loved ones had a stroke, hesitated and their family member's stroke care was delayed.”

According to Lola Irvin, DOH Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Division Administrator, “The majority of strokes are preventable by working with a doctor or health care team to monitor blood pressure and cholesterol levels and by living an active and healthy lifestyle.”

The following are ways to help prevent a stroke:

- Choose healthy foods and drinks daily
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Exercise regularly
- Regularly check and control your blood pressure
- Quit smoking/vaping; and
- Properly manage medical conditions such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart disease and diabetes.

The “**BE FAST for Stroke**” campaign is slated to run through November 2023, and includes digital, social media, print, bus, and mall advertisements statewide. The public is encouraged to visit the campaign website, BeFast.hawaii.gov, to learn more.

BE FAST FOR STROKE!

Hawaii Stroke Coalition
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

For more information, visit BeFast.hawaii.gov

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