

STROKE and HEART Attack Recognition for the lay person EPO 5/7/18 Arlyss Rothman, RN, FNP, PhD

STROKE

Definition: When parts of the brain are damaged due to lack of proper circulation and oxygenation

Types: Ischemic – Caused by a blockage such as a clot or plaque (most common), or
Hemorrhagic – Caused by a bleed into the brain

Risk Factors: Over 60

- High blood pressure
- Heart Disease
- Uncontrolled cholesterol
- Diabetes
- Irregular heartbeat, Arrhythmia
- Smoking
- Family History of Stroke
- Hemorrhagic stroke – Injury
- Bleeding disorders
- Cocaine use
- Abnormal blood vessel that breaks
- Lack of exercise
- Poor diet
- On blood thinners

Stroke Signs Mnemonic : FAST

- Facial asymmetry or drooping – ask to smile
- Arm weakness – raise both, does one drift down?
- Speech changes – slurred, nonsense, aphasia
- Time to call 911

You could also see confusion, trouble walking, balance off, coordination off, Severe headache. Hemorrhagic stroke often with intense headache as first sign, nausea and vomiting, light sensitivity, vision problems, loss of consciousness, seizures, Memory and thinking problems, in addition to other signs and symptoms.

If symptoms are transient, it could be a Transient Ischemic Attack (TIA) that should be evaluated as they are often precursors to a larger stroke.

The FASTER to treatment the better likelihood of good outcome and less damage to the brain.

HEART ATTACK

Definition: When heart tissue is damaged by lack of oxygen or blockage of the vessels

Types: Largely Ischemic

Risk Factors: Similar, but blood thinners not usually a problem

Heart Attack Signs Mnemonic: STOP

Shortness of Breath

Tightness in the chest – feels like an elephant is sitting on your chest

Other signs – Cold sweats (diaphoresis), dizziness, heart palpitations, loss of consciousness;

Pain in the chest, throat, neck, jaw, arms or back

Again, Time is of the essence ! Call 911 for immediate help. If you are trained in CPR and have the ability, you can try to help while waiting.