

What is Stroke?

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Transcript

[0:00 Introduction]

Dr. Ada Tang: Here is what you need to know about stroke. My name is Ada Tang. I'm an Associate Professor and Assistant Dean of Rehabilitation Sciences in the School of Rehabilitation Science at McMaster University. I lead the MacStroke Canada research team.

[What is stroke? 0:13]

Dr. Ada Tang: Stroke happens when there is a disruption to the blood flow to the brain. Did you know that there are 50,000 strokes every year in Canada? A stroke can happen in two different ways. One is where there's a blockage of blood flow to the brain through a clot, and this is called ischemic stroke. The second type of stroke is called a hemorrhagic stroke, where a blood vessel bursts and there's bleeding into the brain tissue.

[Signs of stroke 0:50]

Dr. Ada Tang: It's important to recognize the signs of stroke when it's happening because 'time is brain'. We say that stroke is a medical emergency. The longer that the brain goes without oxygen, the more permanent damage can happen.

You might have heard the term FAST, and this is an easy way to recognize the signs of stroke. F-A-S-T.

'F' stands for face. If you notice drooping of the facial muscles. 'A' stands for arms. Can the person raise their arms at the same level? 'S' is speech. Are there changes in their speech? Are they jumbling? Are they slurring their speech? And 'T' is time. It's time to call 911.

[How to prevent stroke 1:13]

Dr. Ada Tang: Is it possible to prevent stroke? We know that there are certain risk factors that are very well known for stroke. Certain things, like a family history of stroke or older age. Those are what we call non-modifiable risk factors for stroke. Those are things we can't change. But there are a lot of risk factors for stroke that we can change. High blood pressure is one of the strongest risk factors for stroke. But there are also things like low levels of physical activity. A diet low in fruits and vegetables. Obesity and smoking. These are things that we can have some control over.

Keeping blood pressure under control is important. Living a physically active lifestyle, having a diet that's rich in fruits and vegetables. Maintaining a healthy weight and stopping smoking are really important ways that you can lower your risk for stroke.

One of the things that's also important is that once a person has a stroke, they are at higher risk of having a second stroke. And all of the things that I've just mentioned will also help lower the risk of having another stroke in the future.

[What happens after a stroke? 2:10]

Dr. Ada Tang: So, after somebody has a stroke, what's next? Well, there's a lot of things that can happen after a stroke. A stroke can affect a person in many different ways. Physically, they might see changes in their body in terms of weakness of the muscles, changes in their balance, maybe changes in tone or muscle stiffness in the hands, changes in how they think, their memory and their thinking, changes in their speech, changes in even their mood, and fatigue and pain. And these are things that rehabilitation teams can help manage after stroke.

The rehabilitation team is a group of specialized health professionals that can help you reach your goals. It can comprise of physiotherapists like myself, occupational therapists, speech pathologists, social workers, nurses, doctors. You name it. And they can help you work on things that are important to you to help you leave hospital and get back home.

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