

How you can help support and prepare for the campaign

Learn FAST

If you aren't already familiar with stroke signs and how to respond to them, familiarise yourself with FAST and know when to call 999.

Encourage others to learn FAST

We need your help to encourage everyone to learn FAST. If there are team members, colleagues, family or friends who you think might need to learn FAST, inform them now so they can support the campaign.

Plan for an increased interest in stroke

There may be measures that you or your organisation need to put in to place before the campaign starts. This is most important for emergency services, who may directly experience an increase in awareness and concern amongst members of the public once the campaign starts.

Find out more

Stroke awareness campaign tools will be available as part of the national launch. Further details will be provided on the Department of Health website.

For further information, here are a selection of useful links:

For stroke specialists and healthcare professionals

www.dh.gov.uk/stroke
www.improvement.nhs.uk/stroke

For the general public

www.nhs.uk/stroke

Other useful links

Stroke Association
www.stroke.org.uk

Blood Pressure Association
www.bpassoc.org.uk

Different Strokes
www.differentstrokes.co.uk

Connect
www.ukconnect.org



Approaching FAST...

... a national campaign to increase stroke awareness

What you need to know.
 How you can prepare.

Stroke – a personal health risk with national importance

Stroke is the third biggest killer in England and the single largest cause of adult disability. But public awareness and recognition of the main signs of stroke are very low and, in response, the National Stroke Strategy sets out the need to improve awareness of stroke.

From February 2009, a three-year campaign will aim to increase awareness

Created in partnership with the Stroke Association, other stroke organisations and expert professionals, the new campaign will use the acronym FAST (see opposite) to educate people on the signs of stroke. It will also encourage them to spot these signs and to call 999 immediately – and not to delay by calling NHS Direct or their GP.

What is a stroke?

Stroke, the brain equivalent of a heart attack, is caused by an interruption to the blood supply to the brain. There are two main types: ischaemic (where, for example, a blood clot can narrow or block a blood vessel) and haemorrhagic (where a burst blood vessel causes bleeding to the brain). Transient ischaemic attacks (TIAs) are often called 'mini-strokes', because symptoms get better within 24 hours without treatment. But the response to a TIA should be the same as for a major stroke, until diagnosis is certain.

Who does it affect?

Most people who have a stroke are aged over 55, but men or women of any age can be affected. Some ethnic minority groups have increased levels of stroke and are affected at a younger age.



Stroke is a medical emergency

For many years stroke has been seen as untreatable and as an inevitable part of ageing. However, the increased use of thrombolysis (the breaking up of blood clots) and the development of acute stroke units have had a positive impact on stroke services. But people need to be made aware now that stroke is a medical emergency whose outcome can potentially be improved by getting faster treatment.

A FAST response to stroke reduces the risk of death or disability

People need to know the signs of stroke – and what to do if they spot them – to get help as quickly as possible. Someone with stroke is unlikely to be able to help themselves, so it is vital that everyone is ready to intervene and become a 'stroke saver' if they spot the signs.

Remember FAST

Facial weakness – can the person smile?
Has their mouth or eye drooped?

Arm weakness – can the person raise both arms?

Speech problems – can the person speak clearly and understand what you say?

Time to call 999.

Anyone seeing any of these signs should treat it as an emergency.