National Stroke Awareness Month takes place in May every year. In honor of this special time, National Stroke Association strives to provide everyone with the tools and inspiration to raise public awareness about stroke by hosting awareness events or activities. It doesn't matter if you are an individual or a large group, because the more people we reach, the better.

Questions to get started:

1) Tell us about your experience with stroke.
2) What awareness of stroke did you have before your experience?
3) How would your situation/experience with stroke have been different if you/your partner/your medical providers had been more aware about stroke?

National Stroke Association encourages everyone, including Stroke Support Groups, to persuade others to learn about why it's so important to spread the word about stroke:

- STOP primary and secondary stroke through risk factor management.
- Act F.A.S.T. to increase recognition of and response to stroke symptoms.
- Spread HOPE about recovery from stroke.

Note: National Stroke Awareness Month graphic is available for use by visiting www.stroke.org/SAM_materials.

Consider What You Have to Offer in May
Anyone can spread awareness and make an impact. You never know how many lives you may save by helping educate others unless you try. All it takes is just one person to get things started. One way is to brainstorm ideas as to how you as a group or as individuals, can spread the word about stroke? Another would be to have each group/individual write down 2 short-term goals and follow up with them at your next meeting. What were the goals? Who met them? Did anyone have any challenges meeting their goals? What would you have done differently in the future?

Questions/ideas you might consider include the following

- How have you helped to spread stroke awareness in the past? What do you see to be the challenges in raising stroke awareness and how could these challenges be overcome? How have you been able to successfully spread stroke awareness?
• Pledge to educate a certain number of people within the next week or before your next meeting about stroke awareness. How can members use an area of interest or hobby to help generate awareness this May (teaching, gardening, computers, volunteer experience, etc)?

• Encourage members to visit www.stroke.org/SAM for free downloadable awareness materials and ideas for how to spread awareness. If members themselves are unable to access this resource, have them consider a friend, family member, etc who could access the website for them.

• Make sure to take a look at our quarterly magazine, StrokeSmart™.

• Share your story with others if you are willing – write it down – words are very powerful.

Consider how you can use the tools below to spread awareness of stroke this May and every day throughout the year.

SAM TOOLS: Stroke 101 Quiz

1) How many people in America will have a stroke this year?
   a) 8 million
   b) 795,000
   c) 400
   d) 8000
   e) 500,000

2) Strokes can happen at any age.
   a) True
   b) False

3) More women than men die of stroke each year.
   a) True
   b) False

4) Breast cancer causes two times more deaths among women each year than stroke.
   a) True
   b) False
   Answer: Stroke kills twice as many women each year than breast cancer.

5) An ischemic stroke is caused by a blood clot.
   a) True
6) More people suffer from hemorrhagic strokes than ischemic strokes.
   a) True
   b) False
   Answer: About 87 percent of strokes are ischemic.

7) Which of the following is NOT a risk factor for stroke?
   a) High blood pressure
   b) Being overweight
   c) Lung cancer
   d) Diabetes

8) You can receive a clot-buster medicine called t-PA if you get to the hospital within how many hours of noticing the first stroke symptoms?
   a) No time limit
   b) 3 hours
   c) 10 hours
   d) 24 hours

9) You can have a second stroke if you have already experienced one stroke.
   a) True
   b) False

Stroke 101

- Stroke is a **brain attack**, cutting off vital blood flow and oxygen to the brain.
- In the United States, stroke is the third leading cause of death, killing about 137,000 people each year, and a leading cause of serious, long-term adult disability.
- From 1996 to 2006, the stroke death rate fell 33.5 percent and the actual number of stroke deaths fell by 18 percent.
- Approximately **795,000 strokes** will occur this year.
- Stroke can happen to anyone at any time, regardless of race, sex or age.
- Approximately **55,000 more women than men** have a stroke each year.
- Men’s stroke incidence rates are greater than women’s at younger ages, but not older ages.
- African Americans have almost twice the risk of first-ever stroke compared with whites.
- Types of Stroke:
  - **Ischemic stroke** occurs when arteries are blocked by blood clots or by the gradual build-up of plaque and other fatty deposits. About 87 percent of all strokes are ischemic.
Hemorrhagic stroke occurs when a blood vessel in the brain breaks leaking blood into the brain. Hemorrhagic strokes account for thirteen percent of all strokes, yet are responsible for more than thirty percent of all stroke deaths.

- Two million brain cells die every minute during stroke, increasing risk of permanent brain damage, disability or death. Recognizing symptoms and acting fast to get medical attention can save a life and limit disabilities.
- The prevalence of transient ischemic attacks (TIA) increases with age. Up to 40 percent of all people who suffer a TIA will go on to experience a stroke.
- The estimated direct and indirect cost of stroke for 2010 is $73.7 billion.


Few Americans know the symptoms of stroke. Learning them—and acting FAST when they occur—could save your life or the life of a loved one. Remember that: Stroke Strikes Fast. You Should too. Call 9-1-1.

Common stroke symptoms include:

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg – especially on one side of the body,
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding,
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes,
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination,
- Sudden severe headache with no known cause.

Use the F.A.S.T. test for recognizing and responding to stroke symptoms:

F = FACE  Ask the person to smile. Does one side of the face droop?
A = ARMS  Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?
S = SPEECH Ask the person to repeat a simple sentence. Does the speech sound slurred or strange?
T = TIME  If you observe any of these signs, it’s time to call 9-1-1 or get to the nearest stroke center or hospital.

Reducing Stroke Risk

Everyone has some stroke risk in their lifetime. Some risk factors are beyond your control, including being over age 55, being a male (stroke is more common in men than women at younger ages, but more women experience strokes at older ages and more women than men
die from stroke), being African-American, and having a family history of stroke. If you have one of these risk factors, it is even more important that you learn about the lifestyle and medical changes you can make to prevent a stroke. Learn more by reading the Prevention Guidelines below.

Medical stroke risk factors include:

Previous stroke, previous episode of TIA or mini stroke, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, heart disease, atrial fibrillation, diabetes, and carotid artery disease. These medical risk factors can be controlled and managed even if you have already had issues with any of them in the past. Talk with your doctor about what will work best for you.

Lifestyle stroke risk factors include:

Smoking, being overweight and drinking too much alcohol. You can control these lifestyle risk factors by quitting smoking, exercising regularly, watching what and how much you eat and limiting alcohol consumption.

Public Stroke Prevention Guidelines

1. Know your blood pressure. Write it down. If it is elevated, work with your doctor to keep it under control. High blood pressure is a leading cause of stroke. Have your blood pressure checked at least a couple times each year—more often if you have a history of high blood pressure.

2. Find out if you have atrial fibrillation (AF). If you have AF, work with your doctor to manage it. Atrial fibrillation can cause blood to collect in the chambers of your heart. This blood can form clots and cause a stroke. Your doctor can detect AF by carefully checking your pulse. Make sure you know how to check your pulse properly and make an effort to check your pulse a few times a month.

3. If you smoke, stop. Smoking doubles the risk for stroke. If you stop smoking today, your risk for stroke will begin to decrease.

4. If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation. Drinking a glass of wine each day may lower your risk for stroke (provided that there is no other medical reason you should avoid alcohol). Remember that alcohol is a drug - it can interact with other drugs you are taking, and alcohol is harmful if taken in large doses. If you don't drink, don't start. Talk to your doctor about the interactions alcohol may have with the medications you are taking.

www.stroke.org
5. **Know your cholesterol number.** Write them down. If it is high, work with your doctor to control it. Lowering your cholesterol may reduce your stroke risk. High cholesterol can also indirectly increase stroke risk by putting you at greater risk of heart disease - an important stroke risk factor. Often times, high cholesterol can be controlled with diet and exercise; some individuals may require medication.

6. **Control your diabetes.** If you are diabetic, follow your doctor’s recommendations carefully because diabetes puts you at an increased risk for stroke. Your doctor can prescribe a nutrition program, lifestyle changes and medicine that can help control your diabetes.

7. **Include exercise in the activities you enjoy in your daily routine.** A brisk walk, swim or other exercise activity for as little as 30 minutes a day can improve your health in many ways, and may reduce your risk for stroke.

8. **Enjoy a lower sodium (salt), lower fat diet.** By cutting down on sodium and fat in your diet, you may be able to lower your blood pressure and, most importantly, lower your risk for stroke.

9. **Ask your doctor if you have circulation problems.** If so, work with your doctor to control them. Fatty deposits can block arteries that carry blood from your heart to your brain. Sickle cell disease, severe anemia, or other diseases can cause stroke if left untreated.

10. **If you have any stroke symptoms, seek immediate medical attention – CALL 911.**