

### 3 Warning Signs of Stroke

Knowing all the warning signs of a stroke may one day save your life and well-being. That's because the faster you recognize the symptoms, the sooner you can get medical help. And prompt treatment is the key to shielding your brain from a stroke's damage and sparing you serious disabilities such as paralysis, speech impairment, and dementia. You'd probably recognize the classic symptoms, such as sudden weakness on one side of the body or blurred vision, but often the signs are much less obvious. A crushing headache may come on without warning. Your face may feel numb. You may have inexplicable trouble speaking or following what people say.

#### Risk Factors:

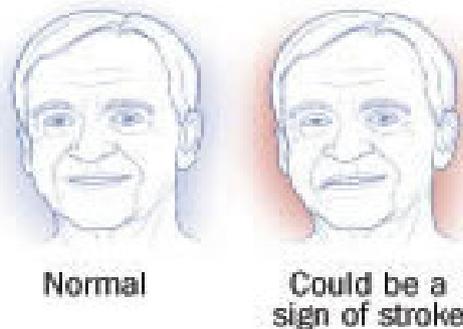
The most common risk factors for both ischemic stroke and TIAs (transient ischemic attacks, or "mini strokes") are:

1. High blood pressure (hypertension),
2. Diabetes,
3. Unhealthy cholesterol levels,
4. Obesity.

All of these factors affect the health of your blood vessels — increasing the risk not only of stroke, but also of heart disease. That's why medications and other steps you take to reduce the risk of an ischemic stroke will also benefit your heart.

#### How to tell when someone's having a stroke

1. **Crooked smile.** Have the person smile or show his or her teeth. If one side doesn't move as well as the other or seems to droop, that could be sign of a stroke.



2. **Arm drift.** Have the person close his or her eyes and hold his or her arms straight out in front for about 10 seconds. If one arm does not move, or one arm winds up drifting down more than the other, they may be having a stroke.
3. **Slurred speech.** Have the person say, "You can't teach an old dog new tricks," or some other simple, familiar saying. If the person slurs the words, gets some words wrong, or is unable to speak, that could be sign of a stroke.

#### Reference:

1. Smeltzer. S & Bare. B "*Medical Surgical Nursing*". 11<sup>th</sup> Edition, Lippincott, Philadelphia, 2008.
2. [Http://www.health.harvard.edu](http://www.health.harvard.edu)