



## Workplace Toolkit

# Stroke and F.A.S.T. key messages

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### Key messages for F.A.S.T. training

- Stroke is New Zealand's second single biggest killer and the leading cause of serious adult disability
- Approximately 9,500 strokes are experienced in New Zealand every year. This means that one stroke occurs every 55 minutes.
- Stroke can affect people at any age
- Nearly 60% of strokes in Māori and Pacific people occur between the age 15 and 65
- Learn the F.A.S.T. check to recognise the signs of stroke.
- Think F.A.S.T. Act F.A.S.T. Call 111 immediately if you see ANY of the F.A.S.T. signs  
Time = brain. The quicker the stroke survivor gets to hospital, the better the chance of recovery
- High blood pressure is the leading cause of stroke and is a risk that can be significantly reduced through lifestyle changes or medication.
- A person with high blood pressure is up to seven times more likely to have a stroke than someone with normal or low blood pressure.

### What is a stroke?

A stroke is a brain attack. It can be fatal.

A stroke happens when a blockage, such as a clot, blocks the blood flow to the brain, or when a burst blood vessel bleeds into the brain. During a stroke, the cells in the affected part of the brain start to die and that part of the brain cannot work properly. This can affect a person's ability to walk, talk, eat, see, read, socialise or do things they were able to do before the stroke.

Many people with stroke may also have fatigue or problems with remembering, understanding or thinking properly.

Disabilities from stroke range from slight to severe. Some people make a speedy recovery and return to their normal lives. Others have disabilities that may improve with time and can be managed. For many, disabilities may last a lifetime. A small number of people will need full-time medical care.

## How can you tell if someone is having a stroke?

By learning the **F.A.S.T.** check. If you recognise the symptoms of stroke, you could save a life!

**FACE** Is their face drooping on one side? Can they smile?

**ARM** Is one arm weak? Can they raise both arms?

**SPEECH** Is their speech jumbled or slurred? Can they speak at all?

**TAKE ACTION** Call 111 immediately.

Other signs of stroke may include:

- Weakness or numbness or paralysis of the face, arm, or leg on either or both sides of the body.
- Dizziness, loss of balance or an unexplained fall.
- Loss of vision, sudden blurring, or decreased vision in one or both eyes.
- Headache, usually severe and abrupt onset, or unexplained change in the pattern of headaches.
- Difficulty swallowing

It's important to remember that **F.A.S.T.** covers 80% of the main symptoms of stroke and a person may only suffer from one or a combination of these symptoms. **NOT ALL.**

## Reducing your risk of stroke

There are things you can do to prevent stroke happening to you or someone you care about. Certain risk factors increase your chances of having a stroke.

Check your

- **Blood pressure** regularly so you can take steps to reduce it if necessary
- **Cholesterol** so it can be reduced if the levels are too high
- **Heart beat**, as an irregular heart beat (atrial fibrillation) can cause stroke. Medication can treat this.
- **Eat a healthy diet and reduce salt.** This helps lower blood pressure and reduce cholesterol.
- **Be smokefree.** Contact Quitline for help to quit.
- **Move more.** Regular exercise and being active will help reduce many risk factors.
- **Keep your alcohol intake low.** Drinking more than two small alcoholic drinks per day can increase your risk of stroke.
- **Lose weight.** Being overweight puts extra strain on your blood vessels and heart. Eating a healthy diet and exercising regularly will help control your weight.
- **Take medication** as prescribed by your doctor.

