

# Press release: New figures show larger proportion of strokes in the middle aged

Public Health England (PHE) today launches the [Act FAST stroke campaign](#) which urges the public to call 999 if they notice even one of the signs of a stroke in themselves, or in others:

- Face – has their face fallen on one side? Can they smile?
- Arms – can they raise both their arms and keep them there?
- Speech – is their speech slurred?
- Time – to call 999

In England, one in six people will have a stroke in their lifetime, and new statistics released by PHE show that 57,000 people had their first-time stroke in 2016. It is estimated that around 30% of people who have a stroke will go on to experience another stroke.

Stroke is the third most common cause of premature death, and a leading cause of disability in the UK. There are around 32,000 stroke-related deaths in England each year. Deaths related to stroke have declined by 49% in the past 15 years. This has been accredited to a combination of better prevention, earlier treatment and more advanced treatment. Getting an NHS Health Check, for those aged 40 to 74 years, can identify early if you are at risk of a stroke.

While the majority (59%) of strokes occur in the older generation, PHE's figures also found that over a third (38%) of first time strokes happen in middle-aged adults (between the ages of 40 to 69). More first-time strokes are now occurring at an earlier age compared to a decade ago. The average age for males having a stroke fell from 71 to 68 years and for females, 75 to 73 years between 2007 and 2016.

Awareness is crucial, so the campaign reaches out to people of all ages to highlight the risk of stroke and reiterates the signs and how vital it is that people call 999 and get to hospital as soon as possible. Around 1.9 million nerve cells in the brain are lost every minute that a stroke is left untreated, which can result in slurred speech and paralysis. If left untreated, a stroke can result in permanent disability or death.

The Stroke Association's latest [State of the Nation report](#) reveals that in the UK almost two thirds (65%) of stroke survivors leave hospital with a disability. Around three quarters of stroke survivors have arm or leg weakness, around 60% have visual problems and around a half have difficulty swallowing and loss of bladder control. Communication is also affected in around a third of stroke survivors.

Professor Julia Verne, Public Health England Director, said:

Stroke is still one of the leading causes of death in England. While it's often associated with older people, the latest research shows that people are having strokes at a younger age. Everyone needs to be aware of the signs.

Calling 999 as soon as you see even one of the symptoms develop – in the face, arms and speech – is essential. Speedy treatment will help prevent deaths and disability.

Tony Rudd, National Clinical Director for Stroke with NHS England and stroke physician at Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust, comments:

Thanks to improved NHS care, stroke survival is now at record high levels. Urgent treatment for strokes is essential, so friends and family can play a key part in making sure their loved ones receive care as quickly as possible.

Every minute counts and knowing when to call 999 – if you see any one of the signs of stroke – will make a significant difference to someone's recovery and rehabilitation.

Steve Brine MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Public Health and Primary Care, said:

Strokes still claim thousands of lives each year, so the message of this Act FAST campaign remains as relevant as ever. The faster you act, the greater the chance of a good recovery. That's why I'm urging everybody, and we must remember stroke can hit at any age, to familiarise themselves with the signs of a stroke and be ready to act fast.

Martin Flaherty OBE, Managing Director of the Association of Ambulance Chief Executives said:

We fully support Public Health England's Act FAST stroke campaign. This is an important message and we urge people to call 999 immediately if they notice the signs or symptoms of a stroke in themselves or in others. Even if it is not a stroke, it is likely to be something that needs medical advice and attention, so calling the ambulance service is the right thing to do.

Juliet Bouverie, CEO of the Stroke Association, said:

As the UK's leading stroke charity, we have said time and again that stroke devastates lives in an instant. Almost two thirds of stroke survivors leave hospital with a disability, but it doesn't

have to be this way. The faster you seek and receive emergency specialist treatment for stroke, the better your chances of making a good recovery. Knowing the signs of stroke and being able to Act FAST could save a life – your life.

The FAST (face, arms, speech, time) acronym has featured in the advertising for a number of years and is a simple test to help people identify the most common signs of a stroke.

1. The Act FAST campaign videos and pictures can be found on [Dropbox](#).
2. Interview opportunities with PHE, healthcare professionals and case studies are available upon request
3. The [Act FAST campaign](#) will run nationally from 1 February. The campaign includes advertising on TV, press, radio, bus interior posters and digital, supporting PR and a social media drive. Some activity will specifically target black and minority ethnic audiences because African, African-Caribbean and South Asian communities have a higher incidence of stroke. Twitter: [@ActFAST999](#), Facebook: [www.facebook.com/ActFAST999](http://www.facebook.com/ActFAST999)
4. A stroke is a brain attack that happens when the blood supply to the brain is cut off, caused by a clot or bleeding in the brain. A mini stroke is also known as a transient ischaemic attack (TIA). It is caused by a temporary disruption in the blood supply to part of the brain.
5. The [Stroke Association](#) is a charity that believes in life after stroke and together we can conquer stroke. It works directly with stroke survivors and their families and carers, with health and social care professionals and with scientists and researchers. They campaign to improve stroke care and support people to make the best recovery they can. They fund research to develop new treatments and ways of preventing stroke. The Stroke Helpline (0303 303 3100) provides information and support on stroke.
6. The [One You campaign](#) is a nationwide programme that supports adults in making simple changes that can have a huge influence on their health. Changes that could help prevent diseases such as type 2 diabetes, cancer and heart disease and reduce risk of suffering a stroke or living with dementia, disability and frailty in later life
7. People aged over-30 are being encouraged to take Public Health England's online ['Heart Age Test'](#) to find out their 'heart age' which will show their potential risk of having a heart attack or stroke and gives them the opportunity to take action. To calculate someone's heart age, they will need to share some lifestyle information, including weight, height and smoking habits. They will then be able to see how their real age compares to their heart age and find out how many years they can expect to live without developing cardiovascular disease

8. Adults aged 40 to 74 are eligible for a free NHS Health Check which is designed to spot early signs of stroke, kidney disease, heart disease, type 2 diabetes or dementia. As we get older, we have a higher risk of developing one of these conditions. An NHS Health Check helps find ways to lower this risk. Those in the age group can expect to receive a letter from your GP or local authority inviting you for a free NHS Health Check every 5 years.
9. Additional symptoms of stroke and mini stroke can include sudden:
  - loss of vision or blurred vision in one or both eyes
  - weakness or numbness on one side of the body
  - memory loss or confusion
  - dizziness, unsteadiness or a sudden fall, especially with any of the other symptoms

## **Celebrity campaign supporters**

Celebrity supporters of this campaign include Shelley King, Gloria Hunniford, Marcus Birdman and Alastair Stewart. Quotes from the celebrities are included below and interviews are available upon request.

Shelley King, actress who plays Yazmeen Nazir on Coronation Street and supporter of the Stroke Association, said:

Both my mother and grandmother have been affected by a stroke so it's something incredibly close to my heart and I want to do anything I can to encourage people to be aware of the signs of a stroke and to act quickly if you notice them, either in yourself or in other people around you. Back in the 90s when my mother had a stroke, there was very little awareness – many people wouldn't have spotted the signs or known what to do, delaying action that could have saved lives. But today, with campaigns like Act FAST, we can be empowered to do more. A stroke can strike at any time – it might be someone just walking down the street who needs your help – so it's crucial that all of us take notice of the FAST acronym and know to call 999 immediately if we see any single one of the signs.

Gloria Hunniford, television and radio presenter and supporter of the Stroke Association, said:

I know first-hand the importance of recognising signs of stroke and acting fast, having had to do so for my husband, Stephen. I was about to head out of our home to work, when Stephen stumbled into the house from the garden saying his left arm felt like cotton wool. My dad had suffered a series of strokes, so recognising the warning bells, I knew I had to act fast. Not many of us realise how quickly the clock is ticking for someone who is suffering stroke – thankfully Stephen got to the hospital in time to receive clot-busting treatment within the crucial 3-hour time window. Whether

it's just one symptom or more, and no matter how subtle, it's absolutely essential to call 999 at the first signs of a stroke. I dread to think what could have happened if Stephen was too late – his outlook could have been much worse. Fortunately, he fully recovered.

Alastair Stewart OBE, journalist and newscaster and supporter of the Stroke Association, said:

My father had a stroke and it was devastating for my family. He was my hero and to see him struggling with disabilities afterwards was heart-breaking. I'd encourage everyone to familiarise themselves with the Act FAST acronym so they can act quickly when they see a stroke happening and hopefully avoid someone experiencing the same difficulties as my father.

Markus Birdman, stand-up comedian and supporter of the Stroke Association, said:

I considered myself to be fit and healthy, so when I was 40 and had a stroke it was a shock. I woke up one morning and found it really hard to see; I had absolutely no idea what was going on. You never think it's going to happen to you, especially not when you're young, but strokes can happen at any age so it's important that people know the signs to look out of so they can act quickly. The faster you act, the less damage that is done and the better the person's chance of a good recovery."

[Public Health England](#) exists to protect and improve the nation's health and wellbeing, and reduce health inequalities. It does this through world-class science, knowledge and intelligence, advocacy, partnerships and the delivery of specialist public health services. PHE is an operationally autonomous executive agency of the Department of Health. Twitter: [@PHE\\_uk](#), Facebook: [www.facebook.com/PublicHealthEngland](http://www.facebook.com/PublicHealthEngland).