

Press release: Quarter of people would not call 999 at the first signs of stroke

Public Health England (PHE) today (2 February 2017) launches its annual Act FAST campaign to remind people of the main symptoms of stroke and the importance of calling 999 immediately if they notice any single one of the symptoms in themselves or others.

Stroke kills over 40,000 people a year and leaves around two-thirds of stroke survivors with a disability.

Research shows that 24% of people would wait to call an ambulance because they wrongly believe that they need to see 2 or more symptoms of stroke to be sure. Other barriers to dialling 999 include feeling that they need permission to act on behalf of others.

As part of the campaign, new films will encourage everyone – whether they are a stranger in the street, a family member at home or the person themselves – not to hesitate and make the call immediately when they see any of the main stroke symptoms:

- 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?

Radio DJ Mark Goodier, who had a stroke last November, and TV presenter Anna Richardson, whose father had a stroke, tell their personal stories alongside people who have survived stroke – some who have recovered well and others who have been left with life-changing disabilities.

The stories show how disability can be greatly reduced if people react quickly to any of the signs of a stroke – urging people to act fast and call 999.

Professor Kevin Fenton, PHE's National Director for Health and Wellbeing, said:

Stroke is one of the leading causes of death in the country, and the faster someone experiencing a stroke gets emergency treatment, the more chance that person has of surviving and avoiding serious disability.

It is crucial to Act FAST when you see any single one of the symptoms of stroke, and do not delay making that all-important 999 call.

Dr Lasana Harris, Experimental and Social Psychologist, University College London, said:

We always look to make sense of a situation and even if someone appears to be having a stroke we may worry about causing offence or mutual embarrassment. If no one else acts, then we ourselves may not see it as an emergency.

However, the imagined consequences of action are minor compared to the consequences of inaction when someone is having a stroke. So act first and worry later.

Juliet Bouverie, Chief Executive, Stroke Association said:

We know people recognise the signs of stroke but they aren't taking the right action at the right time. A stroke is a brain attack and acting fast makes a huge difference.

You are more likely to survive a stroke and make a better recovery if you call 999 on spotting any one of the symptoms. The quicker you act the more of the person you save.

Background

1. Download the Act FAST campaign videos and pictures from [dropbox](#).
2. The Act FAST campaign will run nationally from 2 February to 31 March 2017. The campaign includes advertising on TV, radio, bus interior posters and digital, supporting PR and a social media drive. A separate strand of activity will specifically target BME audiences as African, African-Caribbean and South Asian communities have a higher incidence of stroke. Website: www.nhs.uk/actfast Twitter: [@ActFAST999](#), Facebook: www.facebook.com/ActFAST999.
3. The Act FAST campaign:
 - 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 if you see any single one of these signs
4. Additional symptoms of stroke and mini stroke can include:
 - sudden loss of vision or blurred vision in one or both eyes
 - sudden weakness or numbness on one side of the body
 - sudden memory loss or confusion
 - sudden dizziness, unsteadiness or a sudden fall, especially with any of the other symptoms
5. Professor Tony Rudd, National Clinical Director for Stroke at NHS England, said “NHS stroke care and survival are now at record levels, stroke is very treatable but every minute counts. Knowing when to call 999 when you see any single one of the signs will make a significant difference to someone’s recovery and rehabilitation.”
6. 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. There are around 100,000 strokes in the UK every year and it is the leading cause of severe adult disability. There are over 1.2 million people in the UK living with the effects of stroke. 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.

7. [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. Follow us on Twitter: [@PHE_uk](#) and Facebook: www.facebook.com/PublicHealthEngland.
8. "[Stroke Association](#) is a charity. We believe in life after stroke and together we can conquer stroke. We work directly with stroke survivors and their families and carers, with health and social care professionals and with scientists and researchers. We campaign to improve stroke care and support people to make the best recovery they can. We fund research to develop new treatments and ways of preventing stroke. The Stroke Helpline (0303 303 3100) provides information and support on stroke."

For further information, images or interviews please contact: