Stroke
don’t let it happen to you!
A stroke happens when the normal blood supply to your brain is cut off. If your brain cells do not get a constant supply of oxygen from the blood, they become damaged or die. Damage to these cells can affect your abilities to do, feel, think and remember, depending on which part of the brain is affected by the stroke.

In the UK, someone has a stroke every five minutes. They are more common among those over the age of 55, but can happen at any age. Strokes are the leading cause of adult disability in the UK, and the third most common cause of death, after cancer and heart disease.

The Stroke Association is promoting its ‘FAST’ campaign to help people recognise the symptoms of stroke and take quick action:
Suspect a stroke?
Act FAST and call 999

**FAST**

Facial Weakness

Arm Weakness

Speech Weakness

Test Weakness

**Facial weakness** – can the person smile? Has their mouth or eye drooped?

**Arm Weakness** – can the person raise both arms?

**Speech problems** – can the person speak clearly and understand what you say?

**Test** all three symptoms

A stroke is a medical emergency. If you suspect a stroke, act FAST and call 999.
Prevention
Whether you’ve had a stroke or not, it’s worth knowing the ways to prevent one occurring in the future.

Get your blood pressure checked regularly – untreated high blood pressure (hypertension) is the biggest single risk factor for stroke. Simple lifestyle changes and the right medication can help to reduce your risk.

Smoking – doubles your chances of having a stroke. This is because smoking furthers your arteries and affects your blood, making it more likely to clot. Giving up smoking can be difficult, but help is available. Contact the Smokers Helpline Wales on 0800 169 0 169.

Obesity – if you’re seriously overweight, you’re at greater risk of developing high blood pressure, heart disease, and diabetes. These conditions all increase your chances of having a stroke.
**Exercise** – helps you to maintain a healthy weight, reduces cholesterol and the risks of developing diabetes, high blood pressure and becoming obese. Just 30 minutes of exercise that leaves you slightly out of breath, five days a week, is enough to reduce your risk of a stroke.

**Healthy eating** – helps you to control your weight and keep your arteries healthy. Reduce the levels of salt and saturated fat in your diet by eating less processed food. Eat five portions of fruit and vegetables a day, and choose wholegrain foods which are high in fibre.

**Alcohol** – don’t drink more than the recommended limits of alcohol (2-3 units per day maximum for women, and 3-4 units per day maximum for men). Binge drinking causes your blood pressure to shoot up, which seriously increases your risk of having a stroke.
Stroke: don’t let it happen to you

If you would like more information about Stroke, contact the Stroke Association.

They offer support to people who have had a stroke and their families by providing information, rehabilitation and support services.

Stroke Helpline: 0845 3033 100
Email: info@stroke.org.uk
Website: www.stroke.org.uk

Health Challenge Wales is about better health and well being for the people of Wales. Its message to you is that small and inexpensive changes can make a big difference to your health.

To find out more about what small changes you can make, visit: www.wales.gov.uk/healthchallenge or call 0845 606 4050.