

## Stroke

Stroke occurs when the blood supply to part of the brain is reduced or stopped, depriving that area of oxygen. Millions of brain cells die every minute during a stroke, increasing the risk of permanent brain damage, disability, or death.

### Signs and Symptoms

If you have one or more of the following symptoms, immediately call 911 or emergency medical services (EMS) so that an ambulance can be sent for you:

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm, or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Sudden confusion or trouble speaking or understanding
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden, severe headache with no known cause



Stroke is the  
**THIRD**  
leading cause of death  
in the United States

## HOW A PHYSICAL THERAPIST CAN HELP

Strokes can cause a range of long term problems including:

- Inability to move on one side of the body ("hemiparesis")
- Severely limited movement
- Balance problems
- Weakness in the leg or arm on one side
- Off-and-on numbness
- Unusual physical sensations
- Sensitivity to cold temperatures
- Memory loss
- Slowed or slurred speech
- Difficulty remembering words

Rehabilitation begins very soon after your stroke, and your physical therapist is an important member of your health care team. After an examination, your physical therapist will develop an individualized plan. The plan will focus on your ability to move, any pain you may have, and ways to prevent problems that occur after stroke.