

# How to Be a Stroke Smart Champion

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**Stroke Smart Champions are active in their communities, educating those around them through five simple acts.**

## 1) Ask

- May I take 2 minutes to tell you some important health info about Strokes?
- Do you know how to spot a stroke?

## 2) Warn: Strokes Kill and Disable

- Strokes are the number one cause of disability in the U.S.
- One in Six People with have a stroke in their lifetime
- Every four minutes someone (in the US) dies of a stroke

## 3) Encourage: Quick Response Saves Lives

- A stroke happens when blood flow to your brain is interrupted
- Two million brain cells die every minute during a stroke!
- Treatments to restore the blood flow and save the brain are available!
- If you are treated in time, you may go home in full health.
- The treatments are VERY TIME SENSITIVE
- As soon you Spot a Stroke— **call 911**

## 4) Know: Symptoms may include (even one!)

- Facial droop
- Weak or numb on one side of the body
- Slurred speech
- Loss of balance
- Loss of vision
- Severe headache
- Symptoms can come and go
- **Call 911**

## 5) Offer: Stroke Smart Magnet/Wallet Card

- Here is a reminder to keep in your wallet
- *Please share this with your community*
- If you need more, please let me know.

# Download Free Resources

## Free Downloads of Magnet Printouts, Wallet Cards, and more!

Stroke Smart champions place Stroke Smart magnets and wallet cards in high traffic areas for people to take (get permission when required!). Consider placing display cases at store register counters, in office waiting rooms, at registration check in desks, on office lunchroom tables, etc. Download your free Stroke Smart materials from our [Stay Stroke Smart webpage](#). If you only need one or two memory aids for personal use, [download our Spot a Stroke flyer \(English\)](#) that will allow you to print an aid.

The materials are funded by a the [Coverdell grant from the Centers for Disease Control](#).

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# How to Have a Stroke Smart Medical Office

## Begin with Stroke Smart Medical Practices

Although the window for the most effective stroke treatment is incredibly short (3 hours), too many studies\* suggest that one in three stroke patients first calls their medical provider after stroke signs and symptoms begin. The patient may leave a message if the office is busy, and possibly hear back hours later. The patient may simply request an appointment for some time the next day, placing themselves well outside the treatment window. Although highly effective treatment for strokes is available when accessed in time, strokes remain the #1 cause of disability in the U.S. because people fail to recognize the medical emergency and don't call 9-1-1 immediately.

Strokes kill 2 million brain cells every minute--some of those brain cells allow us to speak, understand speech, feed ourselves, etc. and when they die, we are often left without those abilities. Stroke related disabilities are often avoidable if we receive care within the short treatment window. Although our primary care doctors play an indispensable role in our overall health, calling 9-1-1 is the most effective way to reach timely stroke treatment. This tendency of stroke patients to call their doctor rather than 9-1-1 increases their likelihood of suffering lifelong disabilities and underscores the need for each medical practice to become Stroke Smart.

**Medical practices have the potential to reach significant populations and offer authoritative guidance. A Stroke Smart medical office...**

1. displays Stroke Smart magnets/wallet cards/posters in high visibility areas,
2. offers callers a Stroke Smart voice message, naming stroke symptoms (i.e., sudden onset dizziness/loss of balance, vision changes, facial drooping, body weakness/numbness, etc.) and encourages the caller to hang up and immediately call 9-1-1 rather than leave a voice message or book an appointment if experiencing the symptoms,
  - **A [downloadable voicemail script](#) is available that gives patients instructions on what to do if they suspect a stroke.**

3. educates all receptionists/call takers to screen patients booking appointments for stroke symptoms, encouraging callers with those symptoms to immediately hang up and call 9-1-1,
4. provides Stroke Smart education (identifying the patient's risk factors and highlighting the signs of symptoms of stroke, emphasizing the immediate need to call 9-1-1) during patient intake, while taking vitals and gathering patient history, and
5. encourages each patient to become a Stroke Smart champion, educating others about the signs and symptoms of a stroke and emphasizing the need to call 9-1-1.

## Quotes from Relevant Studies

1. "The top three factors associated with delayed arrival [of stroke patients to the hospital] were if a general practitioner (GP) or primary care facility was visited first, referral from another hospital, and living alone."

If time is brain, where is the improvement in prehospital time after stroke? By Jeremy N. Pulvers and John D. G. Watson, *Frontiers in Neurology*, Mini Review published: 20 November 2017. [Read the article on the Frontiers website](#)

2. \* 2008 International Stroke conference found that, in 22% of cases, a patient or bystander's first response to stroke symptoms was to call a doctor, not an ambulance.

\* A troubling study presented at the American Stroke Association's annual International Stroke Conference in February [2008] found that nearly a third of receptionists in primary care offices would, if talking to patients who reported classic stroke symptoms, direct them to come in for a visit later in the day, rather than telling them to call 911.

Is your staff prepared to respond to a stroke? By J. Berthhold, *ACP Internist*. [Read the article on the ACP Internist website](#)

3. Almost 1 in 3 patients with a diffusion-weighted magnetic resonance imaging–confirmed ischemic stroke first called the family doctor practice. Face-to-face visits to the family doctor quadrupled the odds of prehospital delay. Efforts to reduce prehospital delay should address family doctors and their staffs as important partners in the prehospital pathway. Reasons for Prehospital Delay in Acute Ischemic Stroke Joachim Fladt, MD, et. al, *Journal of the American Heart Association*, October 2019. [Read the article on JAHA's website](#)

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## How to Have Stroke Smart Retirement Communities

Emphasizing that the person suffering the stroke is likely not the person able to activate emergency medical personnel, Stroke Smart Retirement Communities aim to make each resident and staff member Stroke Smart by...

1. displaying Stroke Smart materials in high visibility locations, with posters on bulletin boards and offerings of magnets and wallet cards at visitor check in locations, dining rooms, and information desks, for example,

2. offering yearly Stroke Smart lectures, highlighting the symptoms and urging activation of their internal emergency procedures when at the community and 911 when outside,
3. educating all new staff members and residents with their present significant others of the signs and symptoms of stroke upon admission, and
4. recruiting Stroke Smart champions who ensure each resident is Stroke Smart through personal one-on-one conversations.

Stroke Smart efforts with retirement communities often begin by contacting the community's medical director and asking to offer a Stroke Smart presentation to the residents, who often greatly appreciate the information.

**Suggestions for action items when working to make a retirement community Stroke Smart can be found via our [downloadable Stroke Smart Senior Communities handout](#).**

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## How to Become a Stroke Smart School



### Stroke Smart Schools Make a Meaningful Difference!

Schools are in the unique and POWERFUL position of offering generational benefits to the community as stroke smart students can and have saved lives by recognizing strokes and activating 911. Maryland recommends each school begin their Stroke Smart efforts by educating the entire school body, including staff (in each classroom or in one big assembly). Each year thereafter, every fifth-grade class in elementary schools, or 9th grade class in high schools, could also be given the training to refresh and reinforce the concepts. [A useful study of the beneficial outcomes to a school based stroke education approach is here](#).

Teachers may create their own content or use the any of the presentations on this website or the lesson plan outlines available for:

- [Grades K – 4](#)
- [Grades 5 – 8](#)
- [High School](#)

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## How to Become a Stroke Smart Business

Businesses are in a unique and powerful position to share the lifesaving Stroke Smart message with the public. By first learning the signs of a stroke and knowing to call 911 when those signs are spotted, business owners and employees create a safe stroke environment for their customers. A sizeable percentage of those who call 911 for stroke patients are coworkers! Stroke Smart businesses are therefore also a stroke safe place for customers and for employees.

## A business can become Stroke Smart by:

- Study information about being Stroke Smart
- Provide training to employees about spotting the signs of a stroke
- Download the [free Stroke Smart materials](#) to place in customer-facing areas and offer materials to customers



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# Success Stories — Stroke Smart Faith Based Organizations

Faith based organizations, i.e., churches, temples, mosques, etc. can save lives by becoming Stroke Smart when their members are educated about the signs and symptoms of a stroke and when they know to call 9-1-1 without hesitation when they do spot a stroke.

Norfolk's Second Calvary Baptist Church became the FIRST Stroke Smart church in Virginia to adopt the Stroke Smart Virginia program. Their leadership distributed Stroke Smart memory aids to the congregation with the Stroke Smart training (pictures below) and created this [Stroke Smart presentation video](#) to showcase the event.

While not every faith-based group will have the resources to put together such a fantastic video, a simple talk accompanied by the memory aid distribution is more than enough!



St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Rhode Island became the first Stroke Smart Church in the country, launching its educational outreach efforts with a [pronouncement video](#) of its intentions that included the simple Stroke Smart education.

**Action items for those wishing to make their faith-based organization Stroke Smart may be found by downloading our [Faith Based Tools handout](#).**

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