Oroville Hospital is fast becoming a leader in the detection of strokes. We’ve implemented protocols that assure state-of-the-art treatment to increase a stroke patient’s likelihood of recovery. With an increasing number of people overweight and under active, heart attacks, diabetes and strokes are all-too-common conditions seen at hospitals.

The results of a stroke can be particularly miserable. Not only can a stroke kill, it can also disable. What’s most distressing is that up to 80 percent of strokes could be prevented with healthier lifestyle choices.

What exactly is a stroke? A stroke — also known as a “brain attack” — strikes when blood flow to the brain gets interrupted by a clogged or ruptured artery. This denies oxygen and nutrients to brain cells, which soon die, causing brain damage and depriving the body of functions controlled by that area of the brain.

How common are strokes? Approximately 700,000 Americans suffer a stroke each year. Of those, 160,000 prove fatal.

Stroke is the third-leading cause of death in the U.S., behind heart disease and cancer. “Twice as many women die of stroke than they do of breast cancer,” notes Mary Jarschke, a Registered Nurse who coordinates stroke care at Oroville Hospital. Moreover, Jarschke says, “Stroke is the leading cause of long-term disability.” Two-thirds of the more than 6 million stroke survivors in this country are disabled.

What are risk factors for strokes? • High blood pressure • High cholesterol • Diabetes • Smoking and tobacco use • Obesity • Family or personal history of strokes

How would I recognize a stroke? Common stroke symptoms include sudden onset of: • Numbness or weakness in the face or limbs, particularly on just one side of the body • Confusion or trouble speaking • Vision impairment • Dizziness, loss of coordination or trouble walking • Severe headache

What should I do about a stroke? Call 9-1-1 immediately so the possible stroke victim — you or the person you’re with — can get rapid treatment.

“Get to the hospital quickly,” Jarschke says, “because there is treatment that can be given within a certain time period. Every minute that treatment is delayed, the patient is losing 1.9 million neurons (brain cells). So the sooner they get here, the better they’ll do, and the better the outcome.”

Reducing your risk factors: • Talk to your health care provider • Good nutrition and eating more fresh fruits and vegetables • Increase physical activity • Follow your Doctor’s orders • Stop smoking • Always take your prescribed medications

Mary’s final words of advice: “Be aware of the signs and symptoms of a stroke, like asymmetrical facial weakness, arm weakness, leg weakness on one side, visual disturbances, dizziness, or a sudden onset of headache. These are things that happen quickly and suddenly. When they happen, call 9-1-1 to contact EMS (emergency medical services) and get to the hospital quickly.”

Stroke Support
Sponsored by Oroville Hospital:
Meet the second Tuesday of each month @ the Family Resource Center, 1720 Daryl Porte Way from 2-3:30.
For more information call 534-5519.

For more information about strokes, please call 1-800-STROKE or visit www.stroke.org, www.strokeassociation.org

Sources: Oroville Hospital; American Heart & Stroke Association; National Stroke Association.