

# Strokes:

## know all the warning signs

Doctors call them "little strokes".

Short episodes of dizziness, weakness or numbness in limbs, or double vision may occur and the victim rarely suspects that anything is wrong.

But "little strokes" are often a signal that a full stroke is impending and though it may be days, weeks, months, or years away, the danger is still there.

Usually, the effects of "little strokes" aren't noticeable. As a result,

the victims dismiss the symptoms, unaware of the damage a full-blown stroke can cause.

Until research comes up with the means of preventing high blood pressure and hardening of the arteries, the major contributing factors to stroke, some strokes can be avoided with long-term treatment.

In many cases a stroke can be prevented as a result of the recognition of early warning signs. These

are: sudden, temporary weakness or numbness of the face, arm or leg; temporary loss of speech, or trouble in speaking or understanding speech; temporary dimness or loss of vision, particularly in one eye; an episode of double vision; unexplained dizziness or unsteadiness. In combination with these symptoms, a change in the pattern of headaches may occur.

A stroke occurs when the supply of oxygen-carrying blood to a part of the brain is cut off causing millions of brain cells to die. By halting the oxygen supply for just a few minutes, irreversible brain damage can result.

This year, more than 16,000 Canadians will die from stroke. It is estimated that an additional 150,000 Canadians are afflicted, many with its crippling after-effects. Stroke stems from the same basic risk factors as heart attack.

High blood pressure, high blood cholesterol and excess cigarette smoking are the major ones while a diet high in saturated fats and cholesterol, a lack of exercise and overweight are also important.

The most significant risk factor is high blood pressure. Research studies have demonstrated a sharp reduction in stroke deaths in cases where blood pressure has been controlled.

Data based on long-term studies has shown that control of hypertension, the medical term for high blood pressure, may in fact, prevent stroke. Therefore, the most promising key to prevention is the early detection and control of hypertension.

Stroke has long been viewed as an affliction of old age. But the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario notes that strokes hit young men and women as well as the elderly. They even occur in children. The mean age for strokes in Canada is 50.

This is why the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario emphasizes regular blood pressure checkups and adherence to a proper diet and heart-healthy lifestyle beginning at an early age. The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario emphasizes the education of both physicians and the public regarding the prevention of stroke. High blood pressure control is essential to achieve this goal.

Your Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario can give you more information on stroke prevention. It's yours for the asking.

And do your bit in the fight against heart attack and stroke by supporting your Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario in February.



### Heartening sight

February is Heart and Stroke Foundation annual campaign time in Midland. From left are George Lindblad (honourary co-chairman), Joan Lavin (residential campaign manager), Mayor Allan Roach (honourary past chairman), Pat Best

(public education), Heather Leonard (public relations), and Donna Murton (honourary co-chairman). This year's goal is to raise the same amount of money as last year, around \$10,000.

## Fatal motorcycle crashes were up last year: MTC

Ontario Minister of Transportation and Communications James Snow said recently the "1984 was the worst year ever for motorcycle fatalities," according to a preliminary report.

It showed 136 motorcycle fatalities occurred last year, an increase of 16 per cent from 1983 when 117 people were killed. In 1983, motorcycle deaths had declined by seven per cent from 1982, the previous worst year on record.

"Motorcycle fatalities continue to be one of my major concerns, particularly in light of these figures. I was optimistic that 1983's decline indicated motorcycle fatalities were on the decrease, but the study indicates otherwise," Snow said.

Factors in fatal motorcycle accidents continue to be the same as those in previous years with alcohol remaining a major problem. In addition, more than 60 per cent of the drivers were under 25 years old and 14 per cent failed to wear helmets.

The report also revealed half of all the fatalities occurred in single-vehicle accidents.

The most frequent driver errors were speeding and losing control of the vehicle.

Of particular significance is that one-third of those killed were not licensed to operate motorcycle and another 25 per cent had held their licence for less than one year.

"Last year, we increased the emphasis on motorcycle safety and introduced a revised, more comprehensive motorcycle drivers handbook, and a new written examination for beginners. Motorcyclists are more vulnerable to serious injury from accidents and need special skills to reduce the risks," Snow said.

"Yet it's obvious, we need to take further steps to improve motorcycle safety on our roads and highways."

In April, MTC will host another seminar representatives of the motorcycle community to discuss methods of improving motorcycle safety. At that time, they will explore the concept of tough motorcycle training courses as a means to reducing user accidents in Ontario.

## Fire alarms are down

Midland Fire chief Hal Belfry reports approximately 16 emergency calls over the last 31 days made January a busy month for the town's firefighters.

No injuries resulted from the occurrences, which were all of a minor nature, he says.

Belfry was most surprised, during the current wood heating revival, the January's statistics include no chimney fires.

"I believe that the public is becoming re-educated about the safe and proper operation of wood stoves," he claims.

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