## For Immediate Release:

May, 2009

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**Time lost is brain lost – every second counts when treating stroke**

*May is American Stroke Month*

Recognizing the signs of a stroke is more important than ever before because newer treatments for stroke must be started quickly to be effective.

“Receiving treatment as soon as possible greatly reduces the risk of permanent damage or death from stroke,” said (*name of spokesperson, title, name of city/county health department.)* “Time is absolutely critical for optimal treatment, because time lost is brain lost.”

May is American Stroke Month, and the *(city/county health department)* is urging residents to learn the warning signs and risk factors for stroke, Missouri’s third leading cause of death and a major cause of disability.

Stroke is the third leading cause of death in Missouri. According to the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, 3,226 Missourians died from stroke in 2007.

Health experts recommend using the FAST method for recognizing and responding to stroke:

* F – Face numbness or weakness, especially on one side
* A – Arm numbness or weakness, especially on one side of the body
* S – Speech slurred or difficulty speaking or understanding
* T – Time to call 911, especially if there is a sudden loss of vision, loss of balance with dizziness or a sudden severe headache

Any of these symptoms may indicate stroke, but only a qualified health-care provider can diagnose stroke.

“Stroke is a medical emergency. It happens suddenly and can damage the brain within minutes,” said *(spokesperson’s last name)*.

A stroke occurs when blood flow to the brain is interrupted. When that occurs, brain cells in the immediate area begin to die because they stop receiving the oxygen and nutrients they need to function. The impact of a stroke can range from mild to severe and can affect a person’s speech, movement and memory.

“Clot buster” drug therapy dissolves clots blocking normal blood flow in vessels. The drug therapy, also called lytic therapy, is used to treat ischemic strokes, the most common type of stroke. An estimated 87 percent of all strokes are ischemic, according to the American Heart Association.

“Calling 911, or your local emergency provider, is the most important thing you can do when someone is having a stroke, “said *(spokesperson’s last name)*. “The sooner you seek medical attention, the sooner drug therapy can begin.”

A number of factors can put a person at greater risk for stroke. Risk factors include:

* High blood pressure
* High cholesterol
* Diabetes
* Poor nutrition
* Physical inactivity
* Smoking
* Obesity

The following recommendations can help reduce the risk of stroke:

* See a health-care provider regularly to keep blood pressure, cholesterol and diabetes under control.
* Take medications as prescribed.
* Don’t smoke.
* Be physically active for 30 minutes or more on most days of the week.
* Eat a healthy diet, including plenty of fruits and vegetables, to maintain a healthy weight.

For more information about stroke, go to [www.dhss.mo.gov/Stroke/](http://www.dhss.mo.gov/Stroke/) or [www.cdc.gov/stroke/](http://www.cdc.gov/stroke/).

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