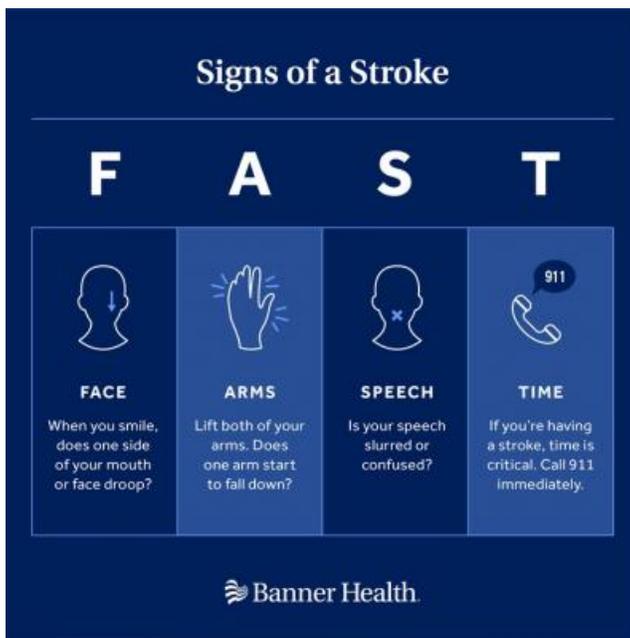


# Act F.A.S.T. to identify stroke symptoms; speed is key to recovery

May is National Stroke Awareness Month and for patients in need of stroke care, delaying treatment could be life threatening



TUCSON, Ariz. (May 20, 2020) – A recent poll by the American College of Emergency Physicians found that nearly a third of American adults, 29%, say that they have delayed or avoided medical care because they have concerns about contracting COVID-19.

“With a stroke, every single second counts because the brain tissue is actively dying - the earlier the stroke is detected and treated, the better.”

[Banner - University Medical Center Tucson](#) and [Banner - University Medical Center Phoenix](#) are the only Joint Commission comprehensive stroke centers in the state. Systemwide, Banner Health has implemented safety measures to prevent the spread of infection, including conducting screenings at hospital entrances to verify that all employees and visitors are well, providing masks to everyone who enters and isolating COVID-19 patients in separate wings or areas.

Ischemic strokes occur when there is reduced blood flow to the brain, usually because of a clot in an artery. In some cases the blood clot dissolves on its own in a couple of hours resulting in only temporary stroke symptoms, called a TIA (transient ischemic attack) or mini stroke.

Brain tissue cannot tolerate loss of blood supply for long periods of time before it is injured; a stroke patient typically loses 1.9 million brain cells per minute if a stroke is not treated; therefore, the key is to seek immediate medical care. “Ischemic stroke is reversible, if treatment is delivered quickly”, said Chelsea Kidwell, MD, medical director of the Comprehensive Stroke Center at Banner - University Medical Center Tucson.

If you recognize the symptoms of a stroke you must get to a hospital quickly. Treatments for acute ischemic stroke are available and include clot busting medication (intravenous alteplase) up to 4 ½ hours and catheter based minimally invasive clot retrieval procedures up to 24 hours from stroke onset.

The comprehensive stroke certification recognizes hospitals that meet standards to treat the most complex stroke cases and who develop a formal referral network to ensure the most complicated cases are treated by the centers equipped to provide this specialized care, ultimately leading to better outcomes.

Specifically, the comprehensive stroke certification recognizes hospitals that meet rigorous standards of performing endovascular thrombectomy (EVT), a surgical procedure to remove a blood clot, endovascular coiling and microsurgical clipping. The certification requires that an acute stroke team, neurosurgical services, and dedicated intensive care beds are available 24/7 for acute ischemic stroke patients and the team can be at a bedside within 15 minutes, while being able to support two patients simultaneously.

In the time of COVID-19, the comprehensive stroke centers are seeing patients who present with more severe cases of stroke as patients are waiting until their symptoms are far advanced before calling 911.

Mohammad El-Ghanem, MD, co-medical director of the Comprehensive Stroke Center at Banner - University Medical Center Tucson said he has treated patients, including younger patients, that present with COVID associated stroke issues. “With a stroke, every single second counts because the brain tissue is actively dying - the earlier the stroke is detected and treated, the better.”

More information on [Banner Health stroke services](#) is available; to be evaluated for your stroke risk, [schedule an appointment](#) with a Banner Health neurologist.

## About Banner Health

As one of the largest nonprofit health care systems in the country, the team at Banner Health is committed to

ensuring all Banner locations are a safe place for care. Headquartered in Phoenix, Banner Health owns and operates 28 acute-care hospitals and an array of other services, including: Banner Imaging, Banner Telehealth and Banner Urgent Care. Team members are dedicated to protecting the health and safety of patients, be it a routine checkup, elective surgery or an urgent health service. Waiting room and employee workstation layouts maintain proper social distancing; screenings are conducted at hospital entrances to verify that all employees and visitors are well; and, all Banner physicians are equipped to visit patients remotely. Learn more about Banner's commitment to safety at [bannerhealth.com/safecare](https://bannerhealth.com/safecare).

 [FAST stroke infographic](#)

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<http://bannerhealth.mediaroom.com/strokecare>