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# EMS



## Bulletin

Office of Emergency Medical Services,  
Virginia Department of Health  
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## Yes Virginia, you do have Designated Stroke Centers

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During the 2008 General Assembly, additional language was added to the "Statewide Emergency Medical Care System" law (§ 32.1-111.3) that established the requirement that the Statewide Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Plan includes a statewide Prehospital and Interhospital Stroke Triage Plan. What does all this mean? Simply, it has been shown that the outcome of persons suffering from an acute stroke benefit by being treated at a Designated Stroke Center, much like a trauma patient at a Designated Trauma Center. The Virginia EMS system will now place the same emphasis on acute stroke care as it does on trauma care.

So what is a Designated Stroke Center? In Virginia a hospital is considered designated as a "primary stroke center" when it has gone through certification by the Joint Commission or a comparable process. Currently, in Virginia, the Joint Commission recognizes the following hospitals as a primary stroke center: Bon Secours – St. Mary's (Richmond), CJW Medical Center – Chippenham Campus (Richmond), Henrico Doctor's Hospital – Forest Campus (Richmond), Inova Alexandria Hospital (Alexandria), Inova Fairfax Hospital (Falls Church), Inova Loudoun Hospital (Lees-

burg), Sentara Norfolk General Hospital (Norfolk), Sentara Virginia Beach General Hospital (Virginia Beach), University of Virginia Health System (Charlottesville), and Virginia Commonwealth University Health Systems (Richmond). Details on the Joint Commission's Primary Stroke Center Certification can be found at <http://www.jointcommission.org/Certification-Programs/PrimaryStrokeCenters/>.

To achieve Joint Commission stroke certification, hospitals' must ensure they have a team approach to treating patients with acute strokes, have written stroke care protocols, and can provide rapid assessments and diagnostic tests such as lab tests and radiological studies. Stroke centers must also meet standards for providing definitive stroke care such as anti-thrombotic therapy. In addition to acute care, a stroke center must be active in identifying risk factors, performing secondary prevention such as treating hypertension and vascular disease. A stroke center must also perform public education on strokes and provide rehabilitation that will help return patients to a point as close to their pre-stroke health as possible.

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**Give  
me 5  
for stroke™**

**WALK**  
Is their balance off?

**TALK**  
Is their speech slurred or face droopy?

**REACH**  
Is one side weak or numb?

**SEE**  
Is their vision all or partly lost?

**FEEL**  
Is their headache severe?

Even if you only have one symptom or your symptom(s) go away, call 9-1-1 immediately.

1-888-4STROKE

[www.giveme5forstroke.org](http://www.giveme5forstroke.org)

## May is National Stroke Awareness Month!

The Virginia Department of Health has resources to help you build stroke prevention programs visit [www.vahealth.org](http://www.vahealth.org)

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What is the definition of an acute stroke? An acute stroke is the time period when the onset of stroke is a short enough period that hospitals can provide a rapid intervention to reverse the effects of the stroke; i.e. relieve a blood clot, or stop an intracranial hemorrhage. Currently, an acute stroke is defined as a three hour window from the onset of any symptom. There are variables that can expand this window of time such as medical treatments that may be performed at limited hospitals and are not considered part of stroke certification; they go above and beyond certification.

Like the Trauma System, the Stroke System needs to be an inclusive system; meaning that all hospitals have a role in the care of stroke patients. It is not

feasible to expect that all acute stroke patients can be transported directly to a designated stroke center. Most Virginia hospitals can provide some level of stroke care. Many provide excellent stroke care, but may not have the volume of patients needed to support a stroke program that can become Joint Commission certified. EMS crews should strive for direct transport to a Designated Stroke Center or utilize air medical services if direct transfer to a stroke center can occur within the three hour window. The OEMS Stroke Web page has more information on what level of stroke care can be provided at most of Virginia hospitals. The web address is <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/OEMS/Trauma/Stroke.htm>.

## How can you....

Learn more about stroke prevention, pre-hospital care for stroke patients and more?

### Provider resources

[www.onlineaha.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=info.stroke](http://www.onlineaha.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=info.stroke)

### Community education

[www.virginiastrokesystems.org](http://www.virginiastrokesystems.org)

### Prevention and provider resources

[www.americanheart.com](http://www.americanheart.com)