



## News Release

### **PHE encourages people to act FAST if they experience stroke symptoms**

- Annual 'Act FAST' campaign launches to highlight the symptoms of stroke
- 10,000 strokes could be prevented annually if mini strokes were spotted and treated<sup>1</sup>
- Just over a third would recognise the warning signs which could mean a major stroke is imminent<sup>2</sup>

[February 2nd Feb] Public Health England is today launching the annual 'Act FAST' campaign, which highlights the common symptoms of stroke and mini strokes and encourages people to call 999 if they notice the symptoms in others or experience them themselves.

Since the Act FAST campaign launched in 2009, an additional 38,600 have got to hospital within the vital three-hour window meaning that stroke sufferers receive the immediate medical treatment required. This not only results in a greater chance of better recovery, but since the campaign launch over 4,000 fewer people have become disabled as a result of a stroke.

A mini stroke has similar symptoms to a full stroke, except that these symptoms last for a much shorter amount of time.<sup>3</sup> Without immediate treatment, around one in five of those who experience a mini stroke will go on to have a full stroke within a few days.<sup>4</sup>

Early intervention following a mini stroke can greatly reduce the risk of having another stroke.

However, while 59% of people surveyed cite stroke as one of the top three conditions they are concerned about behind cancer, new research reveals today that less than half (45%) would call 999 if they experienced the symptoms of a mini stroke.

The campaign urges people to Act FAST if they notice any of the following symptoms, even if they disappear within a short space of time:

- Face – has their face fallen on one side? Can they smile?
- Arms – can they raise both their arms and keep them there?
- Speech – is their speech slurred? If they notice any of these symptoms it is
- Time – time to call 999 if you see any single one of these signs.

This year's campaign will also target African and Caribbean and South Asian communities, as findings reveal they are two times as likely to be at a risk of stroke.<sup>5</sup>

**Professor Julia Verne at Public Health England said:**

“The impressive results from previous Act FAST campaigns show just how important it is that we continue to raise awareness of the symptoms of stroke.

“Highlighting the importance of treating mini strokes with the same urgency as strokes can also make a huge difference - around 10,000 strokes could be prevented annually if mini strokes were treated in time. That's why the Act FAST campaign encourages people experiencing stroke-like symptoms to call 999.”

**Nikki Hill, Deputy Director of External Affairs at the Stroke Association said:**

“We know that sadly, far too many people dismiss their early warning signs of stroke and delay calling 999. Stroke is a medical emergency and getting the right treatment fast can save lives.

“Through this latest campaign we hope as many people as possible know how to act FAST and help reduce the devastating impact a stroke can have.”

The campaign is supported by famous names including author and designer Jools Oliver (whose father suffered a fatal stroke) and former Bond Girl Jenny Hanley (who has suffered mini strokes herself).

**Jenny Hanley said:**

"After having four mini-strokes I feel very lucky not to be suffering from any lasting damage. Being unaware of what the symptoms of mini strokes meant I ignored my attacks and

soldiered on, not seeking help until almost too late. It is vital that everyone is made aware of mini-strokes and the importance of doing something about them immediately."

Ends

**Notes to editor:**

1. The Act FAST campaign will run nationally from 2 February to 1 March 2015. The campaign will consist of TV and Video on Demand advertising supported by digital search. A separate strand of activity including TV, radio and press advertising will specifically target BME audiences.
2. The Act FAST campaign:
  - Face – has their face fallen on one side? Can they smile?
  - Arms – can they raise both their arms and keep them there?
  - Speech – is their speech slurred?
  - Time – time to call 999 if you see any single one of these signs
3. Additional symptoms of stroke and mini stroke include
  - Sudden loss of vision or blurred vision in one or both eyes
  - Sudden weakness or numbness on one side of the body
  - Sudden memory loss or confusion
  - Sudden dizziness, unsteadiness or a sudden fall, especially with any of the other symptoms.
4. A mini stroke is also known as a transient ischaemic attack (TIA). It is caused by a temporary disruption in the blood supply to part of the brain.
5. Public Health England exists to protect and improve the nation's health and wellbeing, and reduce health inequalities. It does this through world-class science, knowledge and intelligence, advocacy, partnerships and the delivery of specialist public health services. PHE is an operationally autonomous executive agency of the Department of Health. Website: [www.gov.uk/phe](http://www.gov.uk/phe). Twitter: [@PHE\\_uk](https://twitter.com/PHE_uk), Facebook: [www.facebook.com/PublicHealthEngland](https://www.facebook.com/PublicHealthEngland)
6. A stroke is a brain attack which happens when the blood supply to the brain is cut off, caused by a clot or bleeding in the brain. There are around 152,000 strokes in the UK every year and it is the leading cause of severe adult disability. There are over 1.2

million people in the UK living with the effects of stroke. Stroke Association is a charity. We believe in life after stroke and together we can conquer stroke. We work directly with stroke survivors and their families and carers, with health and social care professionals and with scientists and researchers. We campaign to improve stroke care and support people to make the best recovery they can. We fund research to develop new treatments and ways of preventing stroke. The Stroke Helpline (0303 303 3100) provides information and support on stroke. More information can be found at [www.stroke.org.uk](http://www.stroke.org.uk)

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<sup>1</sup>Rothwell PM et al (2007) 'Effect of urgent treatment of transient ischaemic attack and minor stroke on early recurrent stroke (EXPRESS study): a prospective population-based sequential comparison'. *The Lancet*, 370 (9596):1432-1442.

<sup>2</sup> Stroke National Campaign Survey (1,040 interviews with adults aged 16+ in England, on the TNS online omnibus between 08 January 2015 and 12 January 2015)

<sup>3</sup><https://www.uclh.nhs.uk/OurServices/ServiceA-Z/Neuro/Stroke/Pages/TIAinformationforpatients.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.stroke.org.uk/sites/default/files/files/SA-The\\_real\\_impact\\_of\\_TIA-Report-SP-v5.pdf](http://www.stroke.org.uk/sites/default/files/files/SA-The_real_impact_of_TIA-Report-SP-v5.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.stroke.org.uk/about/who-risk>