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Act FAST if stroke strikes this Christmas

In the lead up to the Christmas season the National Stroke Foundation has a deadly serious message for all Australians: delaying calling an ambulance if you may be experiencing a stroke could cost you your life.

The Foundation is urging Australians to put their health first during the holidays by being aware of the signs of stroke and taking FAST action when stroke strikes.

National Stroke Foundation Director of Advocacy Scott Stirling said it was tragically common for stroke patients to delay calling an ambulance during the festive season for fear of disrupting their family's holiday plans.

"Stroke is a serious medical emergency which requires urgent medical attention. However too many people, particularly older Australians, ignore the signs or symptoms for fear of being a nuisance to their family and friends," Mr Stirling said.

"Health professionals have told us that there is a marked increase in the number of patients taking too long to get to hospital and sadly, falling outside vital treatment windows as a result over the festive season.

"There are life-saving and disability reducing treatments available for stroke, however they are only effective if you get to hospital quickly. Hospitals stay open right throughout the holiday season. Delaying seeking emergency medical attention can cost you or your loved one your life."

National Stroke Foundation has a simple acronym to help people remember the signs of stroke:

Face – has their mouth drooped?

Arms – can they raise both of their arms above their head?

Speech – is their speech slurred? Can they understand what you're saying?

Time – Call triple zero (000) immediately. Do not delay.

Mr Stirling said a person is likely to show at least one of these signs when they were having a stroke. Symptoms may only appear for a short period of time.

"Stroke is an interruption of blood flow to the brain. Without the blood to deliver oxygen, the stroke affected parts of the brain start to die. When this happens, it sets off a chain reaction, spreading the damage to more of the brain," he said.

"Many people make the mistake of lying down, calling a family member or waiting to see their GP, when they should be calling an ambulance. With stroke every second counts – the sooner you get treatment when you're having a stroke, the better the chances of a good recovery.

"If you can learn the FAST message you might save a life this Christmas - or at least save a person from a life of severe disability."

More information about the signs of stroke is available at <https://www.strokefoundation.com.au>

Interviews available on request.

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