

# Health News You Can Use

## Are You at Risk for Stroke?

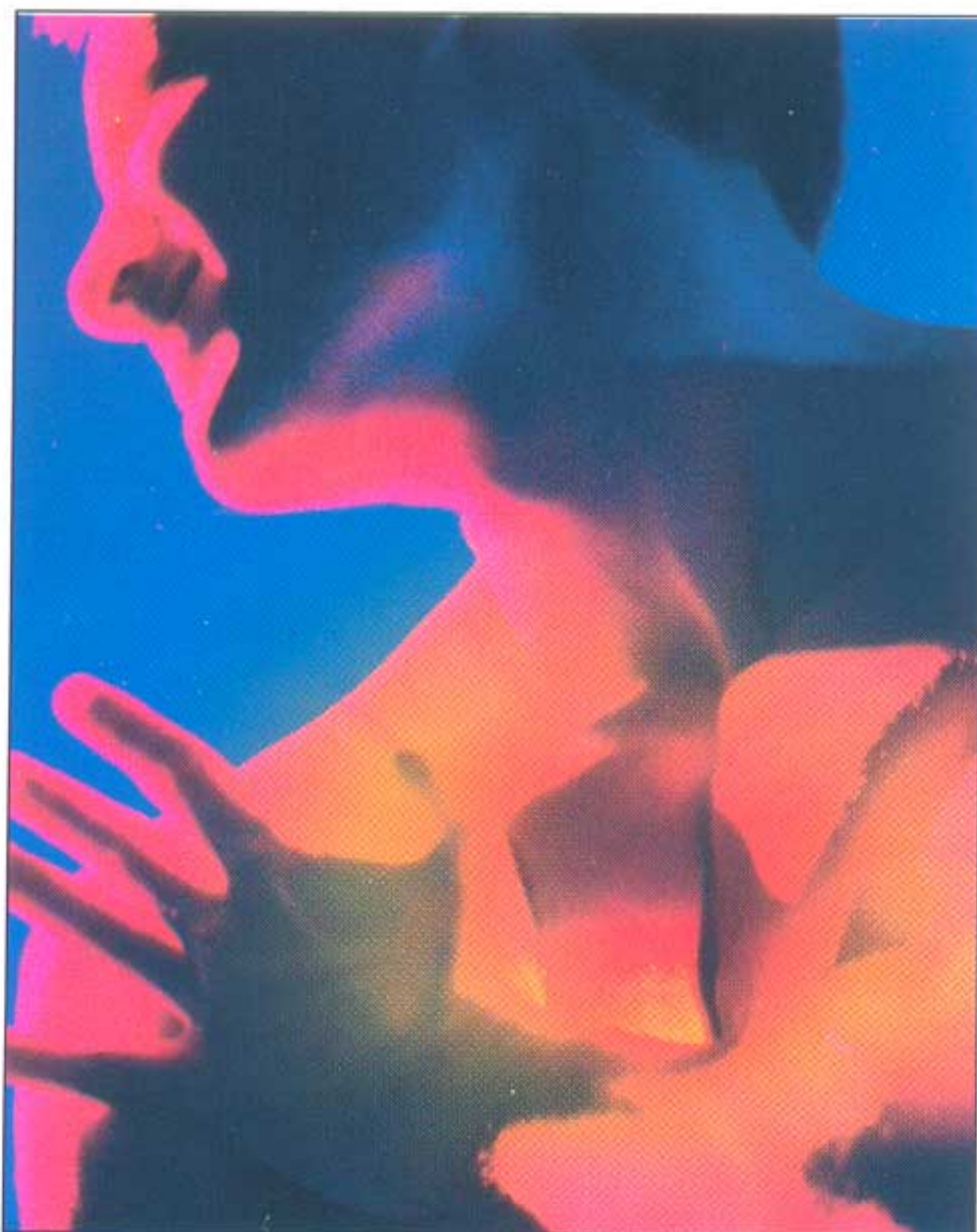
A stroke, sometimes called a "brain attack," occurs when blood flow to the brain is interrupted. When a stroke occurs, brain cells in the immediate area begin to die because they stop getting the oxygen and nutrients they need to function. A stroke can also be called a cerebrovascular accident (CVA), the clinical term for a rapid loss of brain function due to a disturbance in the blood vessels supplying blood to the brain.

There are two major kinds of stroke. The first is called an Ischemic Stroke and the second is called Hemorrhagic Stroke. Ischemic strokes are caused by a blood clot that blocks or plugs a blood vessel or artery in the brain. About 80 percent of all strokes are ischemic. Hemorrhagic strokes are caused by a blood vessel in the brain that breaks and bleeds into the brain. This accounts for roughly 20 percent of strokes.

### What Are The Warning Signs/ Symptoms of Stroke?

Studies show that brain damage begins from the moment a stroke starts. Call 911 immediately if you experience:

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm, or leg (especially on one side of the body)
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding speech
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden severe headache with no known cause



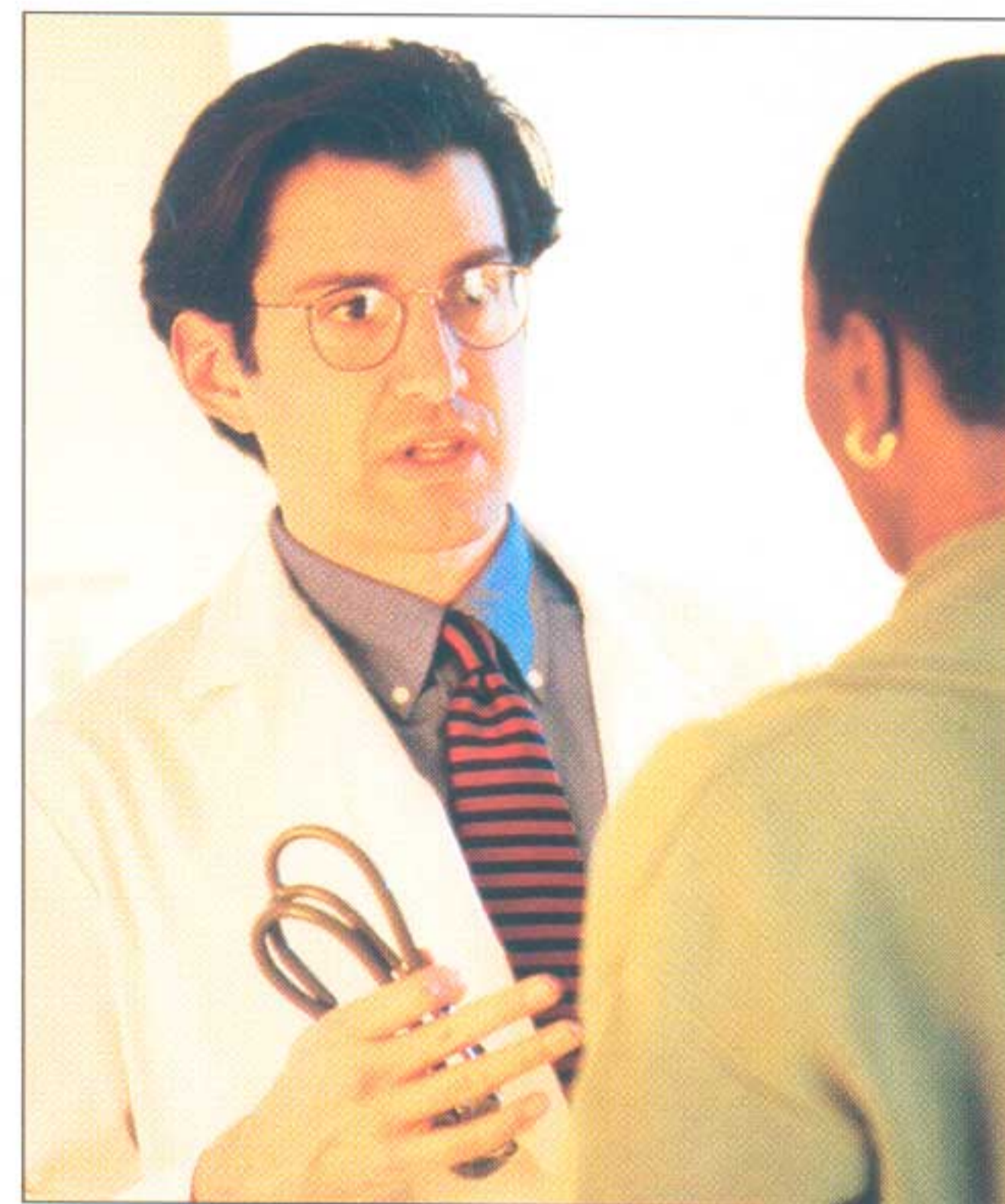
Sometimes the warning signs last only a few moments, then disappear. These brief episodes may be what are called "mini-strokes" or TIA's, also known as transient ischemic attacks. They are signals that you may be at risk for a true stroke. Pay attention to your body and call your doctor immediately.

### Lowering Your Risk for Stroke

Lifestyle changes can help you reduce your risk of stroke. By becoming familiar with the early warning signs of stroke, you may be able to minimize the damage of stroke to your body, your mind and your life.

To lower your risk for stroke, The American Stroke Association makes the following recommendations:

- Get your **blood pressure checked regularly**. You could have high blood pressure and be at risk for stroke without even knowing it. If it is elevated, work with your doctor to keep it under control. High blood pressure increases your chances of having a stroke.
- **Follow doctor's orders**. When blood pressure medication is prescribed, take it exactly as ordered. If you experience any problems, your doctor may be able to change the dose or prescription.
- **Quit smoking**. Smokers have a 50 percent greater risk of stroke than nonsmokers. The combination of smoking and birth control pills dramatically increases the risk of stroke for women.
- Make your **diet low in fat**. It will help you reduce cholesterol and also help you lose weight if you need to. Keeping your blood pressure under control and your weight in check will reduce your risk of heart disease and stroke.
- Stay active. **Regular exercise** may help to reduce blood pressure. It certainly will reduce your risk of heart disease, and decrease your risk for stroke.
- If you drink, do so in moderation. More than two drinks a day can raise blood pressure, and chronic or binge drinking can actually cause stroke.
- Learn how to **relax**. If you respond to stress in unhealthy ways such as overeating, smoking or excessive drinking, you are indirectly contributing to your risk of stroke.
- Find out if you have an irregular heartbeat. Work with your doctor to manage it.
- **If you have symptoms of stroke, seek help immediately.**



Kingsbrook is committed to advancing the well-being of the individuals and families in the communities that it serves. Kingsbrook is pleased to offer Stroke Education and Prevention Seminars through its Speaker's Bureau Program, without charge. Designed to bring prevention and wellness information to the doorsteps of community based organizations, senior citizen centers and health facilities, this program will allow you and your special group the opportunity to discuss the warning signs of stroke thoroughly with a qualified healthcare professional.

For more information on how to schedule a Stroke Education seminar in your community call 718-604-5062. To receive written material about Stroke Prevention you may call Kingsbrook's Stroke Information Line at 718-363-6777. For appointments or information about our bi-annual stroke screenings please call 718-604-5700.

**Disclaimer:** The text presented on this page is for your information only. It is not a substitute for professional medical advice. It may not represent your true individual medical situation. Do not use this information to diagnose or treat a health problem or disease without consulting a qualified health care provider. Please consult your health care provider if you have any questions or concerns.

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