

## **Understanding Stroke: Tips from Dr. Michael Gonsalves, Atrium Health Floyd physician** *Use these tips to recognize stroke symptoms and to take steps to prevent stroke*

**CENTRE, ALA., May 22, 2026** – May is Stroke Awareness Month and now is a good time to better understand stroke, how to recognize when a stroke may be happening and steps to take now to help prevent a stroke in the future.

“Stroke is a leading cause of disability and death in the United States,” said Dr. Michael Gonsalves, Atrium Health Floyd family medicine physician. “Timing of stroke treatment can make all the difference in the outcome. If proper stroke treatment is administered quickly, damage to the brain can be minimized.”

The beginning of a stroke can sometimes be recognized, and the BE FAST acronym is a great way to remember those symptoms, Dr. Gonsalves said.

- **Balance:** Loss of coordination or difficulty walking
- **Eyes:** Sudden blurred or double vision or sudden loss of vision in one or both eyes
- **Face:** Drooping of one side of the face.
- **Arms:** Hold both arms up in front of you, if one arm drifts downward outside your control, this can also be a sign that a stroke is happening.
- **Speech:** Slurred, strange or unintelligible speech, including using words inappropriately.
- **Terrible headache/Time to call 911:** Individuals with any of the above symptoms or a sudden, intense headache should quickly call 911. Time is of the essence when treating stroke.

Treatment with clot-busting drugs and advanced stroke treatment can improve outcomes, but Dr. Gonsalves also emphasized that 80% of strokes can be prevented.

“There are steps patients can take today to reduce their risk of stroke,” Dr. Gonsalves said. “Get regular checkups and let your provider know if a family member has a history of stroke. Managing chronic diseases like high blood pressure, diabetes and high cholesterol can also help. Finally, when you maintain a healthy weight, exercise regularly and limit alcohol consumption you are building defenses against stroke.”

Atrium Health Floyd and Harbin Clinic physicians are located throughout northwest Georgia and northeast Alabama. Video visit options and virtual primary care are also available. Visit [atriumhealthfloyddharbin.org](http://atriumhealthfloyddharbin.org) for more information.

### **About Atrium Health Floyd**

The [Atrium Health Floyd](http://atriumhealthfloyd.org) family of health care services is a leading medical provider and economic force in northwest Georgia and northeast Alabama. Atrium Health Floyd is part of Charlotte, North Carolina based [Advocate Health](http://advocatehealth.org), the third-largest nonprofit health system in the United States. Atrium Health Floyd strategically combined with Harbin Clinic in 2024 and employs more than 5,200 teammates who provide care in over 40 medical specialties at four facilities: Atrium Health Floyd Medical Center, a 361-bed full-service, acute care hospital and regional referral center in Rome, Georgia; Atrium Health Floyd Polk Medical Center in Cedartown, Georgia; Atrium Health Floyd Cherokee Medical Center in Centre, Alabama; and Atrium

Health Floyd Medical Center Behavioral Health, also in Rome. Committed to redefining care for all, Atrium Health Floyd and Harbin Clinic provide primary care, specialty care and urgent care throughout northwest Georgia and northeast Alabama. Atrium Health Floyd also operates a stand-alone emergency department in Chattooga County, the first such facility to be built from the ground-up in Georgia.

#### **About Advocate Health**

[Advocate Health](#) is the third-largest nonprofit, integrated health system in the United States, created from the combination of Advocate Aurora Health and Atrium Health. Providing care under the names [Advocate Health Care](#) in Illinois; [Atrium Health](#) in the Carolinas, Georgia and Alabama; and [Aurora Health Care](#) in Wisconsin, Advocate Health is a national leader in clinical innovation, health outcomes, consumer experience and value-based care. Headquartered in Charlotte, North Carolina, Advocate Health services nearly 6 million patients and is engaged in hundreds of clinical trials and research studies, with [Wake Forest University School of Medicine](#) serving as the academic core of the enterprise. Advocate Health is nationally recognized for its expertise in heart and vascular, neurosciences, oncology, pediatrics and rehabilitation, as well as organ transplants, burn treatments and specialized musculoskeletal programs. Advocate Health employs more than 160,000 teammates across 69 hospitals and over 1,000 care locations and offers one of the nation's largest graduate medical education programs with over 2,000 residents and fellows across more than 200 programs. Committed to redefining care for all, Advocate Health provides more than \$6 billion in annual community benefits.

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