



**MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **Only half of Niagara residents call 9-1-1 upon signs, symptoms of stroke**

Calling 9-1-1 for immediate diagnosis and treatment for stroke is critical, yet only 51 per cent of Niagara residents make that call upon experiencing the signs and symptoms of stroke. Too many people delay seeking medical attention, potentially missing a crucial window of time for stroke care that could improve chances of survival and recovery.

Niagara Health System (NHS) District Stroke Centre is marking World Stroke Day today by reminding the community of the importance of calling 9-1-1 as soon as the signs and symptoms of stroke appear.

“At the very onset of symptoms, call 9-1-1 to improve your chances of survival and recovery,” says Dr. Donald Chew, Neurologist and Medical Director of the stroke centre. “Patients who delay coming to a designated stroke centre may disqualify themselves from receiving clot busting, life-saving medication known as t-PA.”

Stroke symptoms usually appear suddenly and include loss of strength or numbness in the face, arm or leg, difficulty speaking, vision problems, severe and unusual headache and loss of balance.

“I cannot stress enough how important it is to call 9-1-1 as soon as signs and symptoms appear. Paramedics will provide an immediate assessment and begin caring for you. They will transport you by ambulance to our regional stroke centre located at the Greater Niagara General Site,” says Leanne Hammond, Coordinator of the stroke centre. “There is a limited amount of time from the onset of symptoms to when our stroke specialists can inject t-PA. This is why people should not wait to see if they will feel better or drive themselves to the hospital; as soon as stroke symptoms appear, it is vital to call 9-1-1 immediately.”

Niagara has the best “door-to-needle time” (the amount of time patients wait to receive t-PA) in the province at an average of 32 minutes. The benchmark door-to-needle time in Ontario is 60 minutes.

### **ABOUT STROKE CARE IN NIAGARA**

- The NHS’s Niagara District Stroke Centre is the regional centre for stroke care. It is located at the Greater Niagara General Site (GNG) in Niagara Falls, where a specially trained Emergency Department stroke team provides treatment to patients from across the region. This includes assessment and administration of t-PA, or tissue plasminogen activator, a drug that can stop a stroke caused by a blood clot by breaking up the clot in cases of ischemic stroke.
- Patients who receive care at designated stroke centres are more likely to be alive, independent and living at home one year after suffering a stroke.
- A 10-bed acute care stroke unit at GNG cares for Niagara patients who are recovering from acute stroke or TIA (transient ischemic attack).

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