

# senior review

FREE

May 2026

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A Senior Magazine for Living a Healthier, Smarter and More Active Life in Rock County



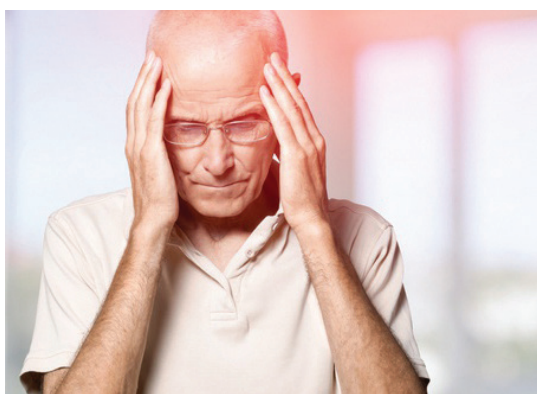
## Recognizing a Stroke: Why Immediate Action Matters

Being able to quickly identify when someone is having a stroke can be the difference between recovery and long-term disability—or even life and death. A stroke occurs when blood flow to part of the brain is interrupted or reduced, depriving brain tissue of oxygen and nutrients. Within minutes, brain cells begin to die. That is why stroke is considered a medical emergency requiring immediate action.

There are three main types of strokes. The most common is an ischemic stroke, which accounts for about 85% of all cases. This type occurs when a blood clot blocks or narrows an artery leading to the brain. The second type is a hemorrhagic stroke, caused by a blood vessel rupturing and bleeding into or around the brain. This can result from high blood pressure, trauma, or weakened blood vessels. The third type is a transient ischemic attack (TIA), often called a “mini-stroke.” TIAs are temporary blockages that resolve on their own, but they are a serious warning sign of a future stroke and should never be ignored.

Recognizing the signs of a stroke is critical, and one of the most widely used tools is the FAST acronym. FAST stands for Face, Arms, Speech, and Time. If a person's face appears drooped or uneven when they smile, if one arm drifts downward when raised, or if speech is slurred or difficult to understand, these are major warning signs. Time is the most important factor—if any of these symptoms are present, call emergency services immediately.

Other symptoms can also indicate a stroke. These include sudden confusion, trouble seeing in one or both eyes, dizziness, loss of balance



or coordination, and a severe headache with no known cause. Symptoms often appear suddenly and without warning, which is why awareness is so important.

If you suspect someone is having a stroke, do not wait to see if symptoms improve. Call 911 immediately. Emergency responders can begin life-saving treatment on the way to the hospital and ensure the patient is taken to a facility equipped to handle stroke care. Do not attempt to drive the person yourself unless absolutely necessary, as delays in treatment can significantly worsen outcomes.

While waiting for help to arrive, keep the person safe and as comfortable as possible. Have them sit or lie down, and loosen any tight clothing. Do not give them food, drink, or medication, as swallowing may be impaired. Try to note the time when symptoms first appeared—this information is crucial for medical professionals, as certain treatments are only effective within a specific time window.

Rapid treatment can dramatically improve outcomes. For example, clot-busting medications for ischemic strokes are most effective when given within a few hours of symptom onset. The sooner treatment begins, the better the chances of minimizing brain damage and improving recovery.

Understanding how to identify and respond to a stroke empowers individuals to act decisively in a crisis. Quick recognition, immediate action, and timely medical care can save lives and significantly reduce the long-term impact of stroke.

# balanced living Tips and ideas for a healthy and balanced life

## May is National Stroke Awareness Month SUSPECT A STROKE? ACT F.A.S.T.

STROKE IS AN EMERGENCY AND A BRAIN ATTACK. ACT FAST AND CALL 9-1-1 AT THE FIRST SIGN OF STROKE.



**FACE:** Facial Weakness. Ask the person to smile. Does the face look uneven? Does one side of the face droop?



**SPEECH:** Speech problems. Ask the person to repeat a simple sentence or phrase. Is their speech slurred or strange?



**ARMS:** Arm Weakness. Ask the person to raise both arms in front of them. Does one arm drift down?



**TIME:** If the person shows any of these symptoms, time is important. Call 9-1-1 immediately. Brain cells are dying.



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# May is ADRC Month: Supporting Wisconsin's Aging Population

Each May, communities across Wisconsin recognize ADRC Month, a time dedicated to highlighting the vital work of Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs). These centers serve as a cornerstone of support for older adults, people with disabilities, and their families—offering trusted information, guidance, and access to long-term care services.

The concept of ADRCs emerged in the early 2000s as part of a national effort led by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. The goal was to simplify what had become a fragmented and often confusing long-term care system. Prior to ADRCs, individuals seeking help with aging or disability services often had to navigate multiple agencies, eligibility requirements, and complex application processes. ADRCs were designed as a “no wrong door” system—meaning anyone, regardless of income or need, could access accurate information and be guided to appropriate resources through a single entry point.

Wisconsin quickly became a national leader in adopting this model. In fact, the state was among the first to implement ADRCs statewide, recognizing the growing needs of its aging population. With a rapidly increasing number of residents over age 65, Wisconsin saw the importance of providing accessible, community-based support that allows people to remain independent for as long as possible.

ADRCs in Wisconsin are publicly funded and available in every county and tribe. Their core role is to provide free, unbiased information about long-term care options. This includes assistance with programs such as Family Care, IRIS (Include, Respect, I Self-Direct), and other Medicaid-funded services. Importantly, ADRC staff do not have a financial stake in the services they recommend, ensuring that individuals receive objective guidance tailored to their specific needs.

One of the most valuable services ADRCs provide is options counseling. Specially trained staff meet with individuals and families to discuss care needs, personal preferences, and available resources. Whether someone is planning for future care, recovering from a hospital stay, or facing a sudden health crisis, ADRCs help map out practical next steps. They also assist with functional and financial eligibility screenings, helping individuals understand what programs they may qualify for.



Beyond counseling, ADRCs play a critical role in prevention and early intervention. They connect seniors to services like home-delivered meals, transportation, caregiver support, fall prevention programs, and benefits counseling. These services not only improve quality of life but can also delay or prevent the need for more costly institutional care.

For caregivers, ADRCs are an essential lifeline. Navigating the complexities of aging or disability care can be overwhelming, and ADRC staff provide clarity, emotional support, and coordination assistance. This can significantly reduce caregiver stress and improve outcomes for both caregivers and those they support.

The benefits of ADRCs extend beyond individuals—they also strengthen communities. By helping seniors remain in their homes and stay engaged, ADRCs contribute to healthier, more connected communities while reducing strain on healthcare systems and long-term care facilities.

ADRC Month in May serves as both a celebration and a reminder: these centers are here year-round, ready to help. Whether planning ahead or responding to an immediate need, Wisconsin residents can rely on ADRCs as a trusted partner in navigating aging and disability services.

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# Caring For Our Military Heros: An Honor And A Profound Responsibility

By Shelley Krupa, Business Operations Coordinator at Jefferson Memory Care

Across the United States, millions of family members and friends provide unpaid care to former service members coping with mental health challenges. Diagnoses of post-traumatic stress, depression, traumatic brain injury, substance use disorders, and other service-connected conditions are common for veterans. According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, veterans are at elevated risk for mental health concerns compared to the general population, particularly those who served in combat zones. For caregivers, the honor of caregiving carries with it cumulative stressors and may lead to burnout, compassion fatigue, financial strain, and declining physical health.



## Understanding the Mental Health Landscape

Veterans may experience post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), major depressive disorder, anxiety disorders, or moral injury related to their service. PTSD manifests as hypervigilance, irritability, intrusive memories, sleep disturbances, or emotional withdrawal. Depression manifests with low moods, hopelessness, or losses of interest in previously meaningful activities. These symptoms affect the veteran and the household dynamic.

Caregivers function as informal case managers—coordinating appointments, managing medications, de-escalating crises, and providing emotional support. Without adequate respite and structural support, their role may become unsustainable.

## Steps to Support the Veteran’s Mental Health

**Engage Professional Care Early.** Connecting with licensed mental health providers experienced in military culture is critical. The Veterans Health Administration offers evidence-based treatments for PTSD and depression, including cognitive processing therapy (CPT) and prolonged exposure therapy (PE). Telehealth options have expanded access, especially in rural communities.

**Develop a Crisis Plan.** Caregivers and veterans should collaboratively create a written safety plan outlining warning signs, coping strategies, and emergency contacts. The Veterans Crisis Line (dial 988, then press 1) provides 24/7 confidential support.

**Promote Routine and Protective Factors.** Structured daily routines, regular physical activity, adequate sleep, and social connection may mitigate symptom severity. Peer support groups—either in-person or virtual—help normalize experiences and reduce isolation.

**Address Co-Occurring Conditions.** Substance use, chronic pain, and sleep disorders commonly co-exist with PTSD and depression. Integrated treatment plans improve outcomes and reduce relapse risk.

## Steps to Provide Caregiver Relief

**Utilize Formal Support Programs.** The VA Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers provides stipends, training, mental health counseling, and respite care for eligible caregivers. Even those not enrolled in the comprehensive program may access caregiver support

coordinators through local VA medical centers. **Schedule Respite Proactively.** Short-term respite—whether through adult day programs, in-home aides, or trusted family members—should be planned routinely, not only during crisis periods. Predictable breaks reduce cumulative stress.

**Seek Caregiver-Focused Counseling.** Caregivers benefit from therapy that addresses secondary trauma, boundary setting, and stress management. Cognitive behavioral strategies and mindfulness-based interventions have demonstrated efficacy in reducing caregiver burden. **Strengthen Financial and Legal Planning.** Navigating benefits, disability compensation, and long-term care planning may reduce uncertainty. Accredited representatives or veteran service organizations are available to assist with claims and resource coordination.

**Build a Distributed Support Network.** Care should not rest on one individual. Establishing a team—including extended family, faith communities, neighbors, and veteran peer networks—creates redundancy and resilience.

**Discuss Alternative Living Situations.** Have tenderly shared tough conversations before needs of assisted living happen as an emergency. Peace of mind comes from having talked about “what if’s” and each person involved has made their wishes known. Schedule a free tour at assisted living facilities like Lake Hallie Memory Care to help you in your planning efforts.

**A Sustainable Model of Care**  
Supporting veterans and sustaining their caregivers are inseparable missions. Through a combination of clinical care, financial stability, and proactive planning, we ensure a higher quality of life for the veteran and prevent burnout for the caregiver. True success in veteran care requires a system that protects the health of both the hero and the helper.

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All services are confidential and completely free of charge. To schedule an appointment or learn more, contact Pete Lopeno at (608) 741-3810. You can also leave an appointment request in the drop box outside the Senior Connection office in the Mercyhealth Mall, 1010 N Washington St., Janesville.

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