



## St. Mary's Hospital nationally recognized for commitment to providing high-quality stroke care

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

St. Mary's Hospital has received the American Heart Association's [Get With The Guidelines® - Stroke](#) Gold Plus quality achievement award for the 16<sup>th</sup> year in a row for its commitment to ensuring stroke patients receive the most appropriate treatment according to nationally recognized, research-based guidelines, ultimately leading to more lives saved and reduced disability.



In addition, the two other hospitals that are part of St. Mary's Health Care System also were recognized in the 2024 Get With the Guidelines-Stroke program. St. Mary's Sacred Heart Hospital in Lavonia received its second consecutive Gold Plus award, and St. Mary's Good Samaritan Hospital in Greensboro – a rural critical access hospital with 25 beds – achieved Stroke Gold Plus recognition for the first time.

Stroke is the No. 5 cause of death and a leading cause of disability in the United States. A stroke occurs when a

blood vessel that carries oxygen and nutrients to the brain is either blocked by a clot or bursts. When that happens, part of the brain cannot get the blood and oxygen it needs, so brain cells die. Early stroke detection and treatment are key to improving survival, minimizing disability and accelerating recovery times.



Get With The Guidelines puts the expertise of the American Heart Association and American Stroke Association to work for hospitals nationwide, helping ensure patient care is aligned with the latest research- and evidence-based guidelines. Get With The Guidelines - Stroke is an in-hospital program for improving stroke care by promoting consistent adherence to these guidelines, which can minimize the long-term effects of a stroke and even prevent death.

“Our entire St. Mary's ministry is committed to improving patient care by adhering to the latest treatment guidelines,” said Stonish Pierce, President and CEO of Trinity Health Georgia, which includes all three hospitals. “Get With The Guidelines makes it easier for our teams to put proven knowledge and guidelines to work on a daily basis, which studies show can help patients recover better. The end goal is to ensure more people in Northeast Georgia can experience longer, healthier lives.”

Each year, St. Mary's and other program participants qualify for the award by demonstrating how their organization has committed to providing quality care for stroke patients. In addition to following treatment guidelines, Get With The Guidelines participants also educate patients to help them manage their health and recovery at home.

"We are incredibly pleased to recognize St. Mary's Hospital, St. Mary's Sacred Heart Hospital and St. Mary's Good Samaritan Hospital for their commitment to caring for patients with stroke," said Steven Messe, M.D., volunteer chairperson of the American Heart Association Stroke System of Care Advisory Group and professor of neurology and director of fellowships of neurology at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania. "Participation in Get With The Guidelines is associated with improved patient outcomes, fewer readmissions and lower mortality rates – a win for health care systems, families and communities."

St. Mary's Hospital also received the American Heart Association's Target: Stroke<sup>SM</sup> Honor Roll Elite award. To qualify for this recognition, hospitals must meet specific criteria that reduce the time between an eligible patient's arrival at the hospital and treatment with thrombolytic therapy. Thrombolytic therapy uses powerful clot-busting medications to dissolve the blood clots that cause ischemic strokes, restoring blood flow to affected areas of the brain.

In addition, St. Mary's Hospital received the American Heart Association's Target: Type 2 Diabetes<sup>TM</sup> Honor Roll award. Target: Type 2 Diabetes aims to ensure patients with Type 2 diabetes, who might be at higher risk for complications, receive the most up-to-date, evidence-based care when hospitalized due to stroke. St. Mary's Sacred Heart Hospital also received this recognition in 2024.

St. Mary's also met specific scientific guidelines as a Joint Commission-certified Thrombectomy-Capable Stroke Center, featuring a comprehensive system for rapid diagnosis and treatment of stroke patients admitted to the emergency department. Thrombectomy-Capable Stroke Centers are available to perform a cerebral thrombectomy 24/7/365, which is an endovascular procedure that removes the large vessel blood clots that can cause some of the most severe ischemic strokes.

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### ***About St. Mary's Hospital***

St. Mary's Hospital is a faith-based, not-for-profit community hospital that has served Athens and Northeast Georgia for more than 117 years. As part of St. Mary's Health Care System and Trinity Health Georgia, its mission is to be a compassionate and transforming healing presence in the communities it serves. St. Mary's Hospital is a certified chest pain center and a gold-plus hospital for stroke care and has a special focus on neurosciences, orthopedics, cardiac care, general medicine/general surgery, and women's and children's health.

### ***About Get With The Guidelines<sup>®</sup>***

Get With The Guidelines<sup>®</sup> is the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association's hospital-based quality improvement program that provides hospitals with the latest research-based guidelines. Developed with the goal of saving lives and hastening recovery, Get With The Guidelines has touched the lives of more than 14 million patients since 2001. For more information, visit [heart.org](https://www.heart.org).