

CJ's Journey: A Wake-Up Call on High Blood Pressure and Stroke Prevention

My name is Chico Meka Atroku, but most people call me CJ. At 59 years old, I never imagined that my life could change so dramatically in an instant. My story is one of survival, regret, and a plea to everyone listening: *Take your health seriously before it's too late.*

In July 2019, my world shifted. Two weeks before my stroke, I had a dream—an eerie vision that I had suffered a stroke. I dismissed it, prayed, and moved on, never thinking it could become reality. But then, one morning at 5 a.m., as I sat on my bed after easing myself, I felt an unusual tingling sensation in my left leg, my left hand, and my foot. At first, I thought it was just poor circulation from waking up too quickly. But within moments, my entire left side constricted. I knew—this was no ordinary discomfort. It was happening.

I called for help, and soon, I found myself in the hospital, where I was transferred to an intensive stroke unit. For a month, I lay there, unable to move my left hand or foot. No sensation. No control. The reality hit hard: *Was this how I was going to live the rest of my life?*

I had been diagnosed with high blood pressure years before and was taking medication. But looking back, I realize I wasn't consistent enough—I was complacent. Maybe, just maybe, if I had taken it more seriously, this wouldn't have happened. Now, life is different. Tasks I once took for granted—walking, bathing, even chopping onions—now require assistance. People may not see my struggle at first glance, but if they observe closely, they'll notice the limp, the struggle, the adjustments I've had to make.

We often think strokes only happen to the elderly. But today, young people—youths—are experiencing strokes due to neglecting their health, failing to check their blood pressure, and ignoring medication schedules. *I beg you—don't wait for tragedy to strike before taking action.*

If I could turn back time, I would have monitored my blood pressure more frequently. I would have ensured I never missed a dose of my medication. I wouldn't have dismissed the warning signs. This is why I'm speaking out today—to prevent others from enduring what I have. Stroke changes everything. It robs you of movement, independence, and even joy. It can lead to depression, and the battle to regain a normal life is exhausting.

I never thought this would happen to me. I never imagined struggling to walk, needing help with basic tasks, or fighting to overcome the mental and physical toll. But it did. And now, I plead with you: **Check your blood pressure regularly. Take your medication seriously. Act before it's too late.**

Some people say, *"God forbid, stroke will never happen to me."* I thought the same. But neglecting your health, ignoring medication, and failing to take proactive steps can put you at risk.

Let my story be a lesson. Let my words be a warning. I wouldn't wish this journey on anyone. Please, for yourself and for your loved ones—*take control of your health now.*