



strokefoundation

Do you know your stroke risk?



Imagine:

- Waking up one morning and being permanently paralysed on one side of your body.
- Being perfectly able to understand words, but unable to speak or write.
- Having to re-learn how to perform the simplest activities of daily living – eating, dressing and bathing.
- Your life and the lives of your family and friends being rearranged.

These are just some of the life-altering ways stroke can affect those it strikes.

1 in 6 people will suffer a stroke in their lifetime, these people are someone's sister, brother, wife, husband, daughter, son, partner, mother, father... friend. Behind these numbers are real lives.

Every 6 seconds someone, somewhere, regardless of age or gender will die from stroke.

Stroke can happen to anyone but many strokes are preventable.

What is a stroke?

- A stroke is a medical emergency.
- A stroke is the way we describe the blood supply to the brain being suddenly cut off.
- This can happen in two ways: Blood can stop moving through the artery when it gets blocked by a clot or when an artery bursts.
- Brain cells can quickly die without the oxygen that the blood supplies.
- This is why it is so important to get to hospital immediately if you think you are having a stroke because it is possible there may be some cells that can survive if you are treated quickly.

Recognising signs of stroke

The FAST test is an easy way to remember and recognise the signs of stroke.

Stroke is **always** a medical emergency. Even if the symptoms don't cause pain or go away quickly – call 000 immediately. The longer a stroke remains untreated, the greater the chance of stroke related brain damage. Emergency medical treatment soon after stroke symptoms begin improves the chances of survival and successful rehabilitation.

Reducing your risk of stroke

There are **6 steps** people can take to reduce the risk and the danger of stroke. These are:

1. Know your personal risk factors: high blood pressure, diabetes and high blood cholesterol – *Know your numbers.*
2. Be physically active and exercise regularly.
3. Avoid obesity by keeping to a healthy diet.
4. Limit alcohol consumption.
5. Avoid cigarette smoke. If you smoke, seek help to stop now.
6. Learn to recognise the warning signs of a stroke and act **FAST**.

Know your risk factors and lower your risk

| Risk factor | How it affects your risk of stroke | Lifestyle changes to lower your risk | Key message |
|---------------------------------|---|--|---|
| High blood pressure | Causes damage to blood vessel walls eventually leading to a stroke. High blood pressure is one of the most important risk factors for stroke. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be smoke free. • Maintain a healthy lifestyle. • Reduce salt intake. • Limit alcohol intake. • Your doctor may prescribe medication. | Know your blood pressure and check it regularly. |
| Smoking | Increases blood pressure and reduces oxygen in the blood. | Stop smoking. | Be smoke free. |
| High blood cholesterol | Contributes to blood vessel disease often leading to a stroke. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain a healthy lifestyle. • Choose foods low in saturated fat. • Your doctor may prescribe medication. | Check your blood cholesterol level. |
| Diabetes | Can cause damage to the circulatory system and can increase risk of stroke. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain a healthy body weight. • Keep blood pressure and blood cholesterol levels down. | Talk to your doctor about keeping diabetes under control. |
| Being overweight | High body fat can contribute to high blood pressure, cholesterol and lead to heart disease, type 2 diabetes and stroke. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain a healthy body weight. • Be physically active. | Talk to your doctor, a dietitian or a nutritionist for help. Be active everyday. |
| Poor diet and inactivity | Can contribute to high cholesterol, high blood pressure and lead to obesity increasing risk of stroke. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain a healthy body weight. • Be physically active. • Eat foods that are good for you. | Talk to your doctor, a dietitian or a nutritionist for help. Be active everyday. |
| Excessive alcohol | Can raise blood pressure and increase your risk of stroke. | Stay within recommended limits (no more than 2 drinks per day). | Limit your alcohol intake. |
| Atrial Fibrillation (AF) | You are more at risk of stroke if you have an irregular pulse due to atrial fibrillation. | Follow general advice to lower risk factors. | If you experience symptoms such as palpitations, weakness, faintness or breathlessness, see your doctor for diagnosis or treatment. |

The more risk factors you have, the higher your chances of having a stroke. Talk to your doctor about calculating your overall risk of stroke and heart attack.

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We have offices in Brisbane, Sydney, Hobart and Perth.

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