

Reducing Risk and Recognizing Symptoms

Stroke is a “brain attack” cutting off vital blood and oxygen to the brain cells that control everything we do – from speaking, to walking, to breathing. Most strokes occur when arteries are blocked by blood clots or by the gradual build-up of plaque and other fatty deposits. Some strokes can be caused by arteries rupturing when weak spots on the blood vessel wall break.

- Stroke is an emergency
- Each year nearly 800,000 people in the U.S experience a stroke
- A stroke happens every 40 seconds
- Every 4 minutes someone dies from a stroke

Everyone has some stroke risk. A few stroke risk factors are beyond your control, such as being over age 55, being a male, being African-American, Pacific/Islander or Hispanic, having diabetes, and having a family history of stroke. If you have one of these risk factors, it is even more important that you learn about the lifestyle and medical changes you can make to prevent a stroke.

Medical stroke risk factors

Previous stroke, previous episode of **transient ischemic attack (TIA)**, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, heart disease, atrial fibrillation and carotid artery disease are all medical risk factors which can be controlled. Talk with your healthcare professional about what will work best for you.

Lifestyle stroke risk factors

Tobacco use, being overweight, not engaging in enough physical activity, and alcohol use are all part of controllable lifestyle risk factors.

National Stroke Association’s Stroke Prevention Guidelines



If you smoke, stop.

Smoking accelerates clot formation, thickens blood, and increases the amount of plaque buildup in the arteries. Smoking doubles the risk for stroke. If you stop smoking today, your risk for stroke will begin to decrease.



Watch what you eat. Try to eat plenty of fruits and vegetables, along with foods that are high in fiber. Limiting salt can help lower

your blood pressure. Eating less cholesterol and fat, especially saturated fat and trans fats, may reduce the plaque in arteries.



Maintain a healthy weight. Carrying extra weight can make you more apt to develop high blood pressure, heart problems, and diabetes—which can all increase the risk for stroke. Your healthcare professional can help you evaluate your weight, calculate your body mass index, and measure your body fat to make sure you're in a healthy range. Often, losing just 10 pounds can make a significant difference in your health.



Be active. A brisk walk, swim or other physical activity for as little as 30 minutes a day can improve your health in many ways, and may reduce stroke risk.



Drink less. Drinking too much alcohol can increase your blood pressure and the risk of stroke. Aim to drink in moderation. No more than two drinks a day for men and one drink a day for women. A standard portion is 5 ounces of wine, 12 ounces of beer, or 1.5 ounces of hard liquor.

Recognizing Symptoms - FAST

KNOW THE SIGNS. ACT FAST.



Other signs of stroke include:

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden severe headache with no known cause

For more information about ways to reduce your risk of stroke, contact National Stroke Association
1-800-STROKES (787-6537)
www.stroke.org

Note: This fact sheet is compiled from general, publicly available information and should not be considered recommended treatment for any particular individual. You should consult your provider about any personal medical concerns.

All publications are reviewed by National Stroke Association's Publications Committee.
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