

Stroke Awareness and Prevention

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You can reduce your risk of stroke. You can start by becoming aware of your risk factors. Some personal characteristics and habits you can't change or control; but some you can. You may just need to make a few changes in your daily habits, food, or take your medication as directed by your health care provider.

Use the following quiz to learn if you are at risk for Stroke.

1. Are you a man over 45 OR a women over 55?
2. Has your mother, father, sister, brother, or grandparent had a stroke OR your father or brother had a heart attack before age 55, OR your mother or sister had a heart attack before age 65.
3. Is your Blood Pressure 140/90 mmHg or higher OR a health care professional has said your blood pressure is too high, OR you don't know what your blood pressure is?
4. Do you smoke OR do you live or work with people who smoke tobacco regularly?
5. Do you have diabetes or need medicine to control your blood sugar?
6. Is your total cholesterol above 240 mg/dL or higher, do you even know what your cholesterol level is?
7. Is your HDL (the good cholesterol) less than 40 mg/dL or you don't know what your HDL cholesterol is?
8. Is your physical activity level less than 30 minutes a day?
9. Are you overweight by 20 lbs. or more for your height and build?
10. Have you been told that you have carotid artery disease or TIA or a disease of the leg arteries, a high red blood cell count, or sickle cell anemia?
11. Have you had atrial fibrillation, coronary heart disease, or other heart conditions or a heart attack?

If you answer YES to 2 or more of these questions, you need to see a health care provider for a complete assessment of your risks.

There are some risk factors for stroke that you will not be able to change. These include your age--the older you are the great your risk for a stroke. Your gender also can't be controlled-- more men than women will have a stroke in any given year. But more women will die of stroke related symptoms than men. Heart disease, TIA's (mini-strokes), and certain blood disorders such as sickle cell anemia or high red blood cell count increase your chances for stroke.

RISK FACTORS THAT YOU CAN CONTROL

- If you smoke cigarettes, you must stop; once you stop your risk of stroke quickly drops.
- Physical inactivity increases the risk of heart disease, which increases the risk of stroke. JUST MOVE, go on a brisk walk, take the stairs, be active at least 30 minutes every day.
- If you have too much fat, especially in the waist, you are at higher risk for health problems. To lose weight, do enough physical activity to use up more calories than you eat every day.
- Limit your alcohol intake--more than one drink a day for women or more than two drinks a day for men can raise blood pressure and lead to stroke.
- Intravenous drug abuse carries a high risk of stroke from cerebral embolism (a clot or other particle that lodges in the brain). Cocaine use has also been linked to strokes and heart attacks. Some have even been fatal in first time users.

STROKE WARNING SIGNS

Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm, or leg, especially of 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.

Not all of these warning signs occur in every stroke. If some occur, don't wait. Get help immediately. Stroke is a medical emergency--call 911.

If you need more information about Stroke, call the American Heart Association at 1-800-AHA-USA1. You can also visit the website www.americanheart.org or www.StrokeAssociation.org for more information.