



Stroke Prevention Guidelines

1. Know your blood pressure., Have it checked at least annually. If it is elevated, work with your doctor to keep it under control.
 - High blood pressure (hypertension) is a leading cause of stroke.
 - Have your blood pressure checked at least once a year - more often if you have a history of high blood pressure. If the higher number (your systolic blood pressure) is consistently above 130, or if the lower number (your diastolic blood pressure) is consistently over 85, consult your doctor.
 - If your doctor confirms that you have high blood pressure, s/he may recommend changes in your diet, regular exercise, and possibly medication.
2. Find out if you have Atrial Fibrillation (also called AF). If you have AF, work with your doctor to manage it.
 - Atrial fibrillation (AF) can cause blood to collect in the chambers of your heart. This blood can form clots and cause a stroke.
 - Your doctor can diagnose AF by carefully checking your pulse. AF can be confirmed with an ECG (Electrocardiogram).
 - If you have AF, your doctor may choose to lower your risk for stroke by prescribing medications such as Coumadin(r) or Aspirin.
3. If you smoke, stop.
 - Smoking doubles the risk for stroke.
 - If you stop smoking today, your risk for stroke will immediately begin to drop.
 - Within five years, your stroke risk may be the same as that of a non-smoker.
4. If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation.
 - Drinking up to two glasses of wine or the alcohol equivalent, each day may actually lower your risk for stroke (provided that there is no other medical reason that you should avoid alcohol).
 - Heavy drinking increases your risk for stroke.
 - Remember that alcohol is a drug. It can interact with other drugs you are taking, and alcohol is harmful in large doses.
5. Know your cholesterol number. If it is high, work with your doctor to control it.
 - Lowering your cholesterol may reduce your risk for stroke. Having high cholesterol can indirectly increase stroke risk by putting you at greater risk of heart disease which is another important stroke risk factor.
 - Some cholesterol lowering medications have been shown to reduce the risk of stroke in some high risk individuals.
 - High cholesterol can be controlled in many individuals with diet and exercise; some may need medication.
 - Recent studies show that some individuals with normal cholesterol may lower their risk for stroke by taking specific medications for cholesterol.

6. If you are diabetic, follow your doctor's recommendations carefully to control your diabetes.

- Having diabetes puts you at increased risk for stroke.
- Often, diabetes may be controlled through careful attention to what you eat.
- Your doctor can prescribe a nutrition program, lifestyle changes, and medicines that can help control your diabetes.

7. Include exercise in the activities you enjoy in your daily routine.

- A brisk walk or other activity for as little as 30 minutes a day can improve your health in many ways, and may reduce your risk for stroke.
- Try walking with a friend, this will make it more likely that you'll make it a habit.
- If you don't enjoy walking, choose another exercise activity that suits your lifestyle; bicycling, golfing, swimming, dancing, playing tennis, or aerobics.

8. Enjoy a lower sodium (salt), lower fat diet.

- By cutting down on sodium and fat in your diet, you may be able to lower your blood pressure and, most importantly, lower your risk for stroke.

9. Ask your doctor if you have circulation problems which increase your risk for stroke. If so, work with your doctor to control them.

- Fatty deposits caused by atherosclerosis or other diseases can block the arteries which carry blood from your heart to your brain. This kind of blockage, if left untreated, can cause stroke.
- You can be tested for atherosclerosis by your doctor.
- If you have blood problems such as sickle cell disease, or severe anemia, work with your doctor to manage these problems. Left untreated, these problems can cause stroke.
- Circulation problems can usually be treated with medications.
- Occasionally surgery is necessary to remove a blockage.