

Reducing Stroke Risk Factors

Strokes are the fourth leading cause of death in the United States. However many strokes are preventable. Risk factors are conditions that increase your chances of having a stroke. Some risk factors can be controlled or changed by you and some cannot.

Risk factors you can control

If you have any of the following risk factors ask your health care provider what you can do to control them to lower your risk of stroke.

High blood pressure

Untreated high blood pressure can damage your blood vessels. This damage makes high blood pressure a major risk factor for stroke. Have your blood pressure checked regularly and talk with your health care provider about treatment if it is high.

Tobacco use

Smoking doubles the risk of stroke. Smoking damages your blood vessels and makes your heart work harder. If you smoke, quit. Avoid second-hand smoke.

Diabetes

People with diabetes are up to 4 times more likely to have a stroke than those without diabetes. If you have diabetes, work with your health care provider to keep it under good control.

High cholesterol

High cholesterol levels can block arteries. If an artery leading to the brain gets blocked you could have a stroke. Talk with your health care provider about how to control your cholesterol.

Being overweight

Extra weight increases your chances of having high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and diabetes. All of these are risk factors for stroke. Talk with your health care provider about a healthy weight for you.

Risk factors you cannot control

The following risk factors also increase your chance of stroke. Even though you have no control over these risk factors, you should be aware of them.

- Age- The risk of stroke increases with age.
- Race- African Americans and Hispanic Americans are at a higher risk of stroke.
- Family history- Having a close blood relative that has had a stroke increases your chances of stroke.
- Prior stroke- Having already had a stroke puts you at higher risk for another one.

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