

Stroke 101 Fact Sheet

- Stroke is an emergency and a **brain attack**, cutting off vital blood flow and oxygen to the brain.
- In the United States, stroke is the fourth leading cause of death, killing over 133,000 people each year, and a leading cause of serious, long-term adult disability.
- There are an estimated **7,000,000 stroke survivors** in the U.S. over age 20.
- Approximately **795,000 strokes** will occur this year, one occurring every 40 seconds, and taking a life approximately every four minutes.
- Stroke can happen to anyone at any time, regardless of race, sex or age.
- From 1998 to 2008, the annual stroke death rate fell approximately 35 percent, and the actual number of deaths fell by 19 percent.
- Approximately **55,000 more women than men** have a stroke each year.
- **African Americans have almost twice the risk** of first-ever stroke compared with whites.
- Types of Stroke:
 - **Ischemic stroke** occurs when arteries are blocked by blood clots or by the gradual build-up of plaque and other fatty deposits. About 87 percent of all strokes are ischemic.
 - **Hemorrhagic stroke** occurs when a blood vessel in the brain breaks leaking blood into the brain. Hemorrhagic strokes account for thirteen percent of all strokes, yet are responsible for more than thirty percent of all stroke deaths.
- Two million brain cells die every minute during stroke, increasing risk of permanent brain damage, disability or death. Recognizing symptoms and **acting FAST** to get medical attention can save a life and limit disabilities.
- The prevalence of transient ischemic attacks (TIA – “mini strokes”) increases with age. Up to 40 percent of all people who suffer a TIA will go on to experience a stroke.
- Women are twice as likely to die from stroke than breast cancer annually.
- The estimated direct and indirect cost of stroke in the United States in 2010 is \$73.7 billion.



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Stroke is an Emergency. Act FAST and Call 9-1-1

Few in the U.S. know the warning signs of stroke. Learning them – and acting FAST when they occur – could save your life or the life of a loved one.

Use the FAST test to remember warning signs of stroke.

- F = FACE** Ask the person to smile. Does one side of the face droop?
- A = ARMS** Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?
- S = SPEECH** Ask the person to repeat a simple sentence. Does the speech sound slurred or strange?
- T = TIME** If you observe any of these signs (independently or together), call 9-1-1 immediately.

Reducing Stroke Risk

Many risk factors are beyond your control, including being over age 55, being a male, being African-American, having diabetes, and having a family history of stroke. If you have one or more 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. However, everyone should do what they can to reduce their risk for stroke – learn more by reading and following the **Stroke Prevention Guidelines** below.

Medical stroke risk factors include:

Previous stroke, previous episode of TIA (or mini stroke), high cholesterol, high blood pressure, heart disease, atrial fibrillation and carotid artery disease. These risk factors can be controlled and managed with the help of a healthcare professional.

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Lifestyle stroke risk factors include:

Smoking, being overweight and drinking too much alcohol. You can control these risk factors by quitting smoking, exercising regularly, watching what and how much you eat and limiting alcohol consumption.

Stroke Prevention Guidelines

1. Know blood pressure (hypertension)

High blood pressure is a major stroke risk factor if left untreated. Have blood pressure checked yearly by a doctor or at health fairs, a local pharmacy or supermarket or with an automatic blood pressure machine.

2. Identify atrial fibrillation (Afib)

Afib is an abnormal heartbeat that can increase stroke risk by 500 percent. Afib can cause blood to pool in the heart and may form a clot and cause a stroke. A doctor must diagnose and treat Afib.

3. Stop smoking

Smoking doubles the risk of stroke. It damages blood vessel walls, speeds up artery clogging, raises blood pressure and makes the heart work harder. Stopping smoking today will immediately begin to decrease risk.

4. Control alcohol use

Alcohol use has been linked to stroke in many studies. Most doctors recommend not drinking or drinking only in moderation – no more than two drinks each day. Remember that alcohol can negatively interact with other drugs you are taking.

5. Know cholesterol levels

Cholesterol is a fatty substance in blood that is made by the body. It also comes in food. High cholesterol levels can clog arteries and cause a stroke. See a doctor if your total cholesterol level is more than 200.

6. Control diabetes

Many people with diabetes have health problems that are also stroke risk factors. Your doctor can prescribe a nutrition program, lifestyle changes and medicine to help control your diabetes.

7. Manage exercise and diet

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Excess weight strains the circulatory system. Exercise five times a week. Maintain a diet low in calories, salt, saturated and trans fats and cholesterol. Eat five servings of fruits and vegetables daily.

8. Treat circulation problems

Fatty deposits can block arteries carrying blood to the brain and lead to a stroke. Other problems such as sickle cell disease or severe anemia should be treated.

9. Act FAST at the first warning sign of stroke

If you have any stroke symptoms, seek immediate medical attention.

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