

KNOW THE FACTS ABOUT

Stroke



What is stroke?

Stroke is a leading cause of death in the United States. More than 800,000 people die in the U.S. each year from cardiovascular disease and strokes.¹

A stroke, sometimes called a brain attack, occurs when a clot blocks the blood supply to the brain or when a blood vessel in the brain bursts. You can greatly reduce your risk for stroke through lifestyle changes and, in some cases, medication.

Are you at risk?

Anyone, including children, can have a stroke. Every year, about 610,000 people in the United States have a new stroke.²

Several factors that are beyond your control can increase your risk for stroke. These include your age, sex, and ethnicity. But there are many unhealthy habits that you can change. Examples include smoking, drinking too much alcohol, and not getting enough exercise.

Having high cholesterol, high blood pressure, or diabetes also can increase your risk for stroke. However, treating these conditions can reduce the risk of stroke. Ask your doctor about preventing or treating these medical conditions.

What are the signs and symptoms?

The five most common signs and symptoms of stroke are:

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

If you think that you or someone you know is having a stroke, call 9-1-1 immediately.



¹ CDC: Deaths: Final Data for 2008. http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr59/nvsr59_10.pdf

² *Circulation*: Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics—2012 Update. <http://circ.ahajournals.org/content/early/2011/12/15/CIR.0b013e31823ac046>

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How is stroke diagnosed?

Your doctor can perform several tests to diagnose stroke, including brain imaging, tests of the brain's electrical activity, and blood flow tests.

Can it be prevented?

You can take several steps to reduce your risk for stroke:

- Eat a healthy diet. Tips on reducing saturated fat in your diet are available on the Web site for CDC's Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity. <http://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/everyone/basics/fat/saturatedfat.html>
- Maintain a healthy weight. CDC's Healthy Weight Web site includes information and tools to help you lose weight. <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/index.html>
- Be physically active. Visit CDC's Physical Activity Web site for more information on being active. <http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/index.html>
- Don't smoke. CDC's Office on Smoking and Health Web site has information on quitting smoking. <http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco>
- Limit alcohol use. See CDC's Alcohol and Public Health Web site for more information. <http://www.cdc.gov/alcohol>

- Prevent or treat your other health conditions, especially high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and diabetes. Visit CDC's pages on these conditions to learn more.

<http://www.cdc.gov/bloodpressure>

<http://www.cdc.gov/cholesterol>

<http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes>

How is it treated?

If you have a stroke, you may receive emergency care, treatment to prevent another stroke, rehabilitation to help you relearn the skills you may have lost because of the stroke, or all three. In addition, lifestyle changes, such as the ones listed above, can help lower your risk for future strokes. Talk with your doctor about the best ways to reduce your stroke risk.

For More Information

Learn more about stroke at the following Web sites:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention:
<http://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/index.htm>
- American Stroke Association:
<http://www.strokeassociation.org>
- National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke:
<http://www.ninds.nih.gov>

