

Stroke: Are You at Risk?

QUIKRISK[™] SELF-ASSESSMENT TEST

This quick test can help you determine whether your risk of stroke is something to discuss with your health care provider. Circle the appropriate response next to each true statement and add up your total.

	Yes	No	
<i>I'm over age 45 (male) or 55 (female).</i>	5	0	
<i>I'm African-American, Hispanic or Asian/Pacific Islander.</i>	5	0	
<i>I weigh more than 30 percent over my ideal body weight (obesity).</i>	10	0	
<i>I have a family history of stroke or heart disease.</i>	10	0	
<i>I smoke.</i>	10	0	
<i>I have high blood pressure (greater than 140/90).</i>	10	0	
<i>I have high cholesterol.</i>	10	0	
<i>I have diabetes.</i>	10	0	
<i>I have an irregular heartbeat (atrial fibrillation).</i>	10	0	
	Often	Sometimes	Rarely/never
<i>I avoid eating fruits, vegetables and whole grains.</i>	10	5	0
<i>I drink more than 1-2 alcoholic beverages a day.</i>	10	5	0

HOW DID YOU DO?

0-25 You're probably at low risk for stroke right now.

30-50 You may be at medium risk for having a stroke in the future and should discuss it with your provider during your next visit.

55-75 You may be at medium-high risk and may want to schedule time with your provider to discuss your risk of stroke very soon.

80-100 You may be considered at high risk for stroke and should speak with a health care professional without delay.

Quick Health Reminders

- **Know** your family history. Your risk of stroke is greater if one of your parents or siblings has had a stroke or TIA.
- **Seek** behavioral counseling to help you quit smoking. Combining smoking cessation medications with psychotherapy has been shown to help even hard-core smokers quit.
- **Remember** that cholesterol-lowering medicines work best when coupled with cutting fat, exercising more and other cholesterol-control strategies.
- **Meet** your need for calcium, a mineral shown to reduce risk of stroke. Choose fat-free or low-fat milk, yogurt and cheese.
- **Inject** activity into everything you do. Take the stairs, walk to the store — even hide the remote and get up to change channels. Having trouble sticking to an exercise workout? **Try this:** Exercise at the same time every day (or every other day) to make it part of your routine.
- **Talk** to your provider if you're a woman taking birth control pills or hormone therapy. Both can raise the risk of stroke.
- **Stay** away from street drugs. Many, such as cocaine or crack cocaine, are risk factors for TIA or stroke.
- **Don't wait** if you notice someone having signs or symptoms of a stroke or TIA. The longer you wait, the greater the chance of disability or death. Call 9-1-1 right away.
- **Take** comfort that many people lead active lives after a stroke. As with heart attack, it is often possible to return to normal activities after recovery.
- **Live** a healthy life. Many factors preventing stroke are within your control.



STROKE

YOUR GUIDE TO PREVENTION



WHAT IS A STROKE?

A stroke occurs when blood is blocked on its way to the brain or a blood vessel bursts in the brain. In either case, brain cells are starved of oxygen and die, much like heart muscle cells die during a heart attack. That's why a stroke is sometimes called a brain attack.

Stroke can cause many serious disabilities, including brain damage, visual impairment and paralysis. Lifestyle choices such as smoking, alcohol abuse or poor diet can greatly increase your risk of stroke, but as people age, everyone has some risk. The good news is that there are steps you can take now to prevent stroke from happening to you.



Understanding Stroke

There are two primary kinds of stroke. **Ischemic (iss-SKEE-mik) stroke**, the more common kind, occurs when a blood clot blocks or plugs a blood vessel in the brain. **Hemorrhagic stroke** happens when a weak or thin blood vessel bursts and bleeds into the brain. High blood pressure can weaken and damage blood vessels and make them vulnerable to both kinds of stroke. Other treatable factors that raise risk of stroke include:

High cholesterol. High levels of LDL (bad cholesterol) or triglycerides can block or limit blood flow in your arteries.

Diabetes. Abnormally high blood sugar levels due to diabetes interfere with your body's ability to process fats efficiently or break down blood clots. Diabetes also raises the risk of high blood pressure.

Atrial fibrillation (AF). AF is an irregular heartbeat that allows blood to pool in the chambers of your heart. This blood tends to clot and the clot can then move into your bloodstream, where it can trigger a stroke.

Are You at Risk?

Stroke can happen to anyone, but family history, age and race can raise your risk. Taking the test in this brochure can help determine your risk of stroke.

PREVENTION: 10 Strikes Against Stroke

- 1. Stop smoking.** Smoking tobacco can double your risk of stroke. Ask your health care provider about medications that can help you quit. Also ask about mental health counseling to help you change your habits and better manage stress.
- 2. Drink only in moderation.** Women who drink more than one alcoholic beverage a day and men who drink more than two a day raise their risk of stroke by 50 percent. If you drink, keep it light, and if you don't drink, don't start.
- 3. Control high blood pressure.** Closely follow any blood pressure-lowering regimen as directed by your provider. Exercising, managing stress, managing your weight and limiting sodium and alcohol intake can also help.
- 4. Lower your cholesterol.** Build meals around plant foods instead of animal products. Take any prescribed cholesterol medicines as directed.
- 5. Maintain a healthy weight.** Obesity increases your chance of developing high blood pressure, heart disease, hardening of the arteries and diabetes, all of which can raise your risk of stroke.



Ministroke: Don't Ignore the Warning

A transient ischemic attack (TIA), or ministroke, limits but does not stop blood flow. Its signs and symptoms are similar to a full-blown stroke but occur for a shorter time and don't leave any apparent lasting effects. A TIA is a strong indicator of a possible major stroke later on, and of the need for preventive steps. Alert your provider at once if you think you've had signs of a ministroke.



Know the Signs of Stroke

A stroke is a medical emergency. If you or someone else has any of these symptoms, get immediate medical attention:

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

- 6. Eat a healthy diet.** Make sure you eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables and three servings of whole grains a day. Get plenty of fiber, such as from oatmeal or beans. And limit foods high in saturated and trans fats.
- 7. Stay physically active.** Experts recommend getting at least 30-60 minutes of moderate activity on most days of the week. (Putting more elbow grease into chores counts too.) Before significantly increasing your activity level, check with your health care provider.
- 8. Control diabetes.** Follow your health team's plan. Watch your blood sugar, cholesterol and blood pressure levels. Eat well-balanced meals and control weight with regular exercise and food portion control.
- 9. Balance your life.** Learning to manage stress can help reduce your risk of stroke by helping to control your blood pressure and other stress-related risk factors. Try relaxation techniques, such as meditation, visualization, yoga, tai chi or progressive muscle relaxation.
- 10. Check your heart.** Find out from your health care provider whether you're at risk for heart disease. Atrial fibrillation (AF) is a common heart condition associated with stroke. Your provider can check for it by carefully taking your pulse and ordering an electrocardiogram (EKG). Blood-thinning medication can help reduce the likelihood of developing a stroke.