



# Are You at Risk for Stroke?

Each year, 750,000 Americans have a stroke. It is our nation's **third** leading cause of death and a **leading cause** of adult disability. Ironically, **many strokes can be prevented**. Are you at risk for stroke? Identify the risk factors that apply to you to find out.

## Uncontrollable Stroke Risk Factors

- Yes **Age: Are you over age 55?**
- No The chances of someone having a stroke go up with age. Two-thirds of all strokes happen to people who are over age 65. Stroke risk doubles with each decade past age 55.
  
- Yes **Gender: Are you male?**
- No Males have a slightly higher stroke risk than females. However, because women in the United States live longer than men, most stroke survivors over age 65 are women.
  
- Yes **Family History: Does your family have a history of stroke?**
- No Although actual risk varies, people with a family history of stroke are at risk for stroke themselves.
  
- Yes **Personal History of Diabetes: Do you have diabetes?**
- No People with diabetes have a high stroke risk. This may be due to circulation problems that diabetes can cause. You can manage this risk factor for stroke by following your doctor's recommendations to control your diabetes.
  
- Yes **Race: Are you of African-American or Hispanic descent?**
- No African Americans and some Hispanics have two to three times the stroke risk of most other racial groups. This may be due to diet, a greater incidence and severity of high blood pressure and diabetes.

*Having one or more uncontrollable risk factors does not necessarily mean you will have a stroke. It does mean that you should pay special attention to the lifestyle factors and treatable medical disorders that you are able to control to lessen your overall risk.*

- Yes **Smoking: Do you smoke?**
- No Smoking doubles your risk for stroke. It speeds up hardening of the arteries, increases the chance for blood clots to form and raises your blood pressure. The good news is that if you quit smoking today, your stroke risk from this factor may decrease significantly.
  
- Yes **Alcohol: Do you consume more than two alcoholic beverages a day?**
- No Studies show that drinking alcohol in moderation – up to two drinks per day – may reduce your risk for stroke by almost half. However, drinking more than two drinks per day may increase your risk for stroke by as much as three times. Since alcohol is a drug which can interact with medication you are taking, we recommend that you discuss alcohol consumption with your doctor. Drinking alcohol can lead to other health and lifestyle problems, so if you don't drink, don't start.
  
- Yes **Weight: Are you overweight?**
- No Excess weight puts a strain on the entire circulatory system. It also makes people more likely to have other stroke risk factors such as high cholesterol, high blood pressure and diabetes. Your doctor can recommend a weight reduction program that includes changes in diet and exercise.

*By adapting a healthy lifestyle, you can significantly decrease your risk for stroke.*

## Controllable Stroke Risk Factors

- Yes **High Blood Pressure: *Is your blood pressure consistently more than 135/85?***  
 No Having high blood pressure or hypertension makes you four to six times more likely to have a stroke. It is the single most controllable stroke risk factor. Hypertension affects approximately 50 million American adults or about one-third of the population. Your doctor may recommend to treat your condition with a combination of the following: a low salt diet, adding moderate amounts of potassium to your diet, losing weight, stopping smoking, enjoying exercise and taking medication.
- Yes **Atrial Fibrillation: *Do you have an irregular heartbeat?***  
 No Atrial fibrillation, also known as AF, is a particular type of irregular heartbeat that affects more than 1 million Americans. AF can increase your stroke risk 4 to 6 times. It can be treated by cardioversion, a procedure in which an electrical stimulus is used to restore your heart's normal rhythm. When this does not work treatment concentrates on preventing the formation of blood clots. This is done with medication.
- Yes **Heart Disease and High Cholesterol: *Do you have heart disease? Is your cholesterol level more than 200?***  
 No Heart disease is an important risk factor for stroke. Plaque that builds up in the arteries can break away and migrate to the brain. This plaque can get caught in the narrow blood vessels of the brain causing a blockage that results in stroke.
- High cholesterol is an indirect risk factor for stroke because it can put you at greater risk for heart disease. A cholesterol level of more than 200 is considered high. If you don't know what your cholesterol level is, find out. If you do have high cholesterol, work with your doctor to develop a plan to lower it. Simple lifestyle changes in diet and exercise may lower your cholesterol. Though most people can control their cholesterol levels through diet and exercise, some cannot and need medication prescribed by their physicians.
- Yes **Previous TIA or Stroke: *Have you already had a TIA or stroke?***  
 No Transient Ischemic Attacks, also called TIAs or mini-strokes, are brief episodes of stroke symptoms that usually last for only a few minutes. Unlike stroke, TIAs do not result in permanent brain damage. TIAs should never be ignored! More than one-third of all people who experience TIAs will go on to have a stroke. If you have already had a stroke, you may be up to 10 times more likely to have another.

*Regular doctor visits can help diagnose these problems and help prevent a stroke before it happens. These stroke risk factors can be managed by lifestyle changes and/or medical care.*

Detection and management of stroke risk factors is the best way to lower your personal risk for stroke. If you answered yes to any of the questions on this form, you may be at increased risk for stroke. If any of the controllable risk factors listed apply to you, National Stroke Association recommends a visit to your doctor to discuss your individual risk and to develop a treatment plan.

Call 911 if you see or experience any of the following symptoms: Sudden numbness or weakness of face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body; sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding; sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes; sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination; sudden severe headache with no known cause. **Stroke is a medical emergency. Treatment can be more effective if given quickly.**



Join Us In the Fight Against Stroke, Become a National Stroke Association Member Today!

1-800-STROKES(800-787-6537) ♦ [www.stroke.org](http://www.stroke.org)