



# Stroke

Each year, more than half a million Americans suffer from strokes.

A stroke, or “brain attack,” occurs when the blood supply is cut off from part of the brain. When this happens, the blood-deprived brain loses its supply of oxygen and nutrients. When the brain is deprived of blood for even a few minutes, it begins to die.

There are two types of stroke — ischemic and hemorrhagic. In ischemic strokes, brain arteries become blocked and prevent blood from nourishing the brain. In hemorrhagic strokes, brain arteries rupture from damage caused by high blood pressure and other risk factors or an aneurysm (an abnormal outpouching of a blood vessel) and cause blood to flood the brain, creating pressure that leads to brain-cell death.

## Warning signs of stroke

Many warning signs indicate you may be suffering a stroke. Depending on the function of the part of the brain affected, the person suffering the stroke suddenly may become paralyzed, blind or unable to speak.

**If you experience any of the major stroke warning signs listed below, call 911.**

It is important to get to a hospital immediately.

- sudden loss of speech

- slurred speech
- sudden loss of vision
- blurry or double vision
- sudden paralysis
- sudden weakness
- sudden dizziness
- sudden, severe headache, often accompanied by neck stiffness and vomiting

Remember that for every minute brain cells are deprived of oxygen during a stroke, brain damage increases. The chances for survival and recovery improve when treatment begins within the first few hours of stroke warning signs.

## Risk factors for stroke

Many factors increase the risk for stroke. Some factors can be controlled, while others cannot.

**High blood pressure:** Strokes are four to six times more likely to occur in people with high blood pressure.

**High cholesterol:** People with high cholesterol are at double the risk of having a stroke.

**Heart disease:** Strokes are six times more likely to occur in people with heart disease.

**Being overweight:** Excess weight can lead to heart disease and high cholesterol, which, in turn, increase chances of having a stroke.



**Heavy drinking** increases the risk for stroke.

**Smoking:** Smokers have double the risk for stroke as compared to nonsmokers.

**Men** are more likely to have strokes than women.

**African-Americans** have a higher rate of stroke than other races.

**Age:** After age 55, there is an increased likelihood of stroke.

**Diabetics** are at higher risk for stroke.

**Those who have a family history** of strokes or a prior stroke are at higher risk for having a stroke.

## Do you want to reduce your risk?

- Control your blood pressure.
- Find out if you have heart disease, especially an irregular heartbeat known as atrial fibrillation (AF).
- Don't smoke.
- Find out if you have a diseased carotid artery (arteries that provide blood flow to the head).
- Lower your cholesterol.
- Limit your alcohol intake.
- Control your weight.
- If you have diabetes, manage the disease.

For patients with risk factors, medications for blood pressure, diabetes and high cholesterol are important preventive measures. Smoking must stop. A person who has had transient ischemic attacks (also known as TIAs or ministrokes) or a stroke may be treated with aspirin or other antiplatelet or anticoagulant medications to reduce the risk of another attack. A type of surgery called carotid endarterectomy is sometimes recommended to reduce the risk of a major stroke. In this procedure, the fatty deposits in the carotid artery that block blood flow to the brain are removed. Non-surgical options for opening blocked carotid arteries include angioplasty and stenting.

## Stroke treatment and management

Immediate treatment of a stroke may limit or prevent brain damage. A thrombolytic agent or "clot buster" medication must be given within the first three hours of the onset of stroke symptoms. Hence, it is critical to get to the hospital quickly if you experience stroke symptoms. The fastest way is to call 911.



## Remember

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## Primary Stroke Center

Medina Hospital is certified by The Joint Commission as a Primary Stroke Center. This signifies that the hospital has met stringent national stroke care standards and offers expert diagnosis and comprehensive stroke care from a multidisciplinary team of specialists.

Medina Hospital's emergency department is equipped to administer special medications that can halt or reverse stroke damage. Medina Hospital is linked to Cleveland Clinic's main campus by a 24-hour stroke pager and stroke teleradiology system.

If your primary care physician has diagnosed you as being at risk for a stroke, a Medina Hospital stroke neurologist can help determine your best course of treatment. Please call **330.725.1000** to schedule an appointment.

For a free stroke information kit, visit [medinahospital.org/stroke](http://medinahospital.org/stroke).

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