

Strokes: What to Watch for and How to Prevent Them

If you had a stroke before, you have a greater chance of having one again. Read this to find out what to watch for and what you can do to prevent a stroke.

What are the main warning signs of stroke? Think...F.A.S.T.



Face – Is it drooping?



Arms – Can you raise both?



Speech – Is it slurred or jumbled?



Time – Call 9-1-1 right away



Beyond F.A.S.T. – Other symptoms of stroke include:

- sudden numbness or weakness of the leg or trouble walking
- dizziness or loss of balance or coordination
- confusion or trouble understanding
- sudden loss or decreased vision in one or both eyes, and/or
- sudden severe headache with no known cause.

What happens with a stroke?

A stroke is an injury to a part of the brain when the blood flow is interrupted. There are two main types of stroke:

- The most common is an ischemic stroke caused by **blood clots**.
- A hemorrhagic stroke is caused by a **bleed** in the brain.

The effects of a stroke can vary. It depends on where the brain was injured and how much damage was done.

What are the risk factors?

Risk factors are things that increase your risk of having a stroke. Some things you can control, while others you cannot.

You are more likely to have a stroke if you:

- have high blood pressure (hypertension)
- have high blood cholesterol
- have diabetes
- smoke
- are overweight
- have an unhealthy diet
- drink a lot of alcohol
- don't exercise enough
- have heart disease or atrial fibrillation
- are under stress

Some factors you cannot control.

- Sex—until a woman reaches menopause, she is at lower risk than a man
- Have a family history of stroke
- Are from Aboriginal, African, or South Asian descent
- Had a stroke before (including Transient Ischemic Attack (TIA) or “mini-stroke”)
- Age—the older you are, the higher your risk

How can I avoid getting a stroke?

Know your risk factors and take care of your health.

- Monitor blood pressure regularly.
- Monitor blood sugar levels, and keep it in a healthy range.
- Check cholesterol, including “bad” (LDL, TG’s) and “good” (HDL).
- Take your medicine as your doctor prescribes.

Live a healthy lifestyle.

- Make time for a regular check-up with your doctor.
- Be smoke-free. Quit smoking and avoid using recreational drugs.
- Stay active. Exercise 3 to 5 times per week for 30 to 60 minutes. This can include walking, swimming or other physical activity. Talk with a physiotherapist if you have any questions.
- Eat healthy foods.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Manage stress. Do 20 minutes of relaxation per day.
- Reduce alcohol or cut out alcohol. Talk to your doctor about how many drinks are OK, if any.

For more information contact the **Heart and Stroke Foundation** at www.heartandstroke.ca or 1 888 473 4636.

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