

Preventing Recurrent Stroke



Once you've had a stroke or TIA, you're at greater risk for having another one. That's why it's so important to understand and manage your risk factors for stroke.

Controllable risk factors

Medical Risk Factors

Medical risk factors for stroke can be controlled and managed. They include:

- Previous stroke or TIA
- High cholesterol
- High blood pressure
- Heart disease
- Atrial fibrillation
- Carotid artery disease

Talk with your doctor about what will work best for you.

Lifestyle Risk Factors

Unhealthy lifestyle behaviors can put you at significant risk for another stroke. They include:

- Smoking
- Being overweight or obese
- Drinking too much alcohol

Fortunately, you can control these risk factors by quitting smoking, eating a healthy diet, exercising regularly and drinking only in moderation or not at all.

Uncontrollable risk factors

Some risk factors for stroke are beyond your control, including:

- Age 55+
- Male
- African-American
- Diabetic
- History of stroke

If you have one of these risk factors, it is even more important that you learn about the lifestyle and medical changes you can make to prevent a stroke.

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Guidelines to reduce your risk for recurrent stroke

Control your blood pressure. Have your blood pressure checked at least once each year or more often if you have a history of high blood pressure. If your blood pressure is elevated, work with your doctor to lower it.

Find out if you have atrial fibrillation (AF). Atrial fibrillation can cause blood to collect in the chambers of your heart. This blood can form clots and cause a stroke. Your doctor can detect AF by carefully checking your pulse. If you have AF, your doctor can help you manage it.

Quit smoking or using tobacco products. Smoking doubles the risk for stroke. If you stop smoking today, your risk for stroke will begin to decrease. Attend a Franciscan Health System tobacco cessation support group. For information, go to chifranciscan.org or call 1 (888) 825-3227.

Drink alcohol in moderation or not at all. Drinking a glass of wine or beer may lower your risk for stroke (provided that there is no other medical reason you should avoid alcohol). Remember that alcohol is a drug. It can interact with other drugs you are taking, and it is harmful if taken in large doses. If you don't drink, don't start. If you need help to stop drinking, talk to your doctor.

Know your cholesterol number. If it is high, work with your doctor to reduce it. Some individuals may require medication, but in many cases high cholesterol can be controlled through diet and exercise alone.

Control your diabetes. People with diabetes are at increased risk for stroke. If you are diabetic, follow your doctor's recommendations. Your doctor can prescribe a nutrition program, lifestyle changes and medicine that can help control your diabetes.

Exercise daily. Take a brisk walk, swim or engage in another exercise activity for as little as 30 minutes a day. Work with your doctor to develop a plan that's right for you.

Watch your weight. Cut down on sodium and fat in your diet. If you're overweight, consider attending one of Franciscan Health System's weight management programs. For information, go to chifranciscan.org or call 1 (888) 825-3227.

Ask your doctor if you have circulation problems. If so, work with your doctor to control them. Fatty deposits can block arteries that carry blood from your heart to your brain. Sickle cell disease, severe anemia or other diseases can cause stroke if left untreated.

If you have any stroke symptoms, seek immediate medical attention!

Content provided by permission of the National Stroke Association. Visit www.stroke.org for patient, caregiver and health care professional stroke education resources.



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