

# Stroke

A stroke happens when the brain does not get enough blood. This kills brain cells. Many adults die from strokes.

Strokes can change the way a person thinks, speaks, sees, and moves. After a stroke, it may be harder to care for yourself or to have a job.

The good news is many people who have had a stroke can get back some or all of their skills. Speech and physical therapy can help.

## There are two major causes of stroke:

- A blood clot from another part of the body blocks a blood vessel or artery in the brain.
- An artery bleeds in or around the brain.

## Who has strokes?

- Adults over the age of 40 are most likely to have strokes. Younger adults and kids can also have them.
- About the same number of men and women have strokes.

- People of all races are at risk for stroke. African Americans are almost twice as likely to die from a stroke as whites. African Americans often have more damage.
- People with heart disease may have a bigger risk of stroke. Certain kinds of heart disease can cause blood clots.

## How can you lower your risk of stroke?

- Control your blood pressure—Having high blood pressure adds to the chances of having a stroke. One out of three people with high blood pressure does not know it. Get your blood pressure checked often.
- Control your diabetes—Diabetes can damage the blood vessels in the brain and increase the chance of having a stroke. Follow your doctor's advice to control your diabetes.
- Stop smoking—Smoking can cause blood clots. It can also make blood pressure higher. Ask your doctor, pharmacist or nurse about ways to quit.
- Exercise daily—Exercise makes the heart stronger and blood flow better. It can also help you control your weight. Being heavy increases the chance of diseases.



# Stroke

Don't ignore the signs of a stroke. Even if you feel better in a few minutes or hours, you may have had a "mini-stroke." Mini-strokes may put you at risk for a full-blown stroke later. Call 911 if you have any of these warning signs (or have someone else call right away):

- Your face feels numb.
- Your arm or leg gets weak or numb.
- You lose part or all of your sight in one or both eyes.
- You have a hard time talking and/or understanding other people.
- You get a very bad headache for no reason.
- You get dizzy or fall all of a sudden.

FDA has approved a few drugs to prevent and treat stroke. Ask your doctor for more information.

**FDA Office of Women's Health** <http://www.fda.gov/womens>

## To Learn More:

### **National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke Information Office**

Phone: 301-496-5751  
<http://www.ninds.nih.gov>

### **National High Blood Pressure Education Program**

c/o National Heart, Lung, and Blood  
Institute Information Center  
Phone: 301-592-8573