

Eight Tactics for Avoiding a Stroke

A stroke occurs when a blood vessel carrying oxygen to the brain is either blocked by a clot or ruptures and spills into the surrounding brain tissue. Although stroke is the number three cause of death behind heart disease and cancer, many fewer Americans die of strokes than did so 20 or 30 years ago. Improvements in control of the risk factors, as well as advances in medical care, are responsible. Although some risk factors, such as age, family history and race, cannot be changed, others can be modified if you maintain a healthy lifestyle by:

- **Exercising regularly:** Exercise will reduce your blood pressure, increase your HDL (good) cholesterol, and improve the health of your cardiovascular system. It will also help you maintain your weight and reduce stress. Try to include 30 minutes of aerobic activity most days of the week. Consult your healthcare provider before beginning to exercise.
- **Controlling your blood pressure:** Exercise, maintaining a healthy weight, and limiting the salt in your diet are the first round of defense. If your doctor prescribes medication, be sure to take it exactly as directed. Commonly used medications include diuretics, ACE inhibitors, Beta blockers, and angiotensin receptor blockers (ARBS).
- **Lowering your cholesterol:** Eating less saturated fat should reduce the plaques in your arteries which can cause blockages. If nutritional changes alone are not enough, your healthcare provider may prescribe cholesterol-lowering medications such as statins.
- **Avoiding smoking:** Smokers have an elevated risk of having a stroke. However, it will only take a few years for a former smoker's risk of stroke to return to that of a nonsmoker, so it is never too late to quit.
- **Maintaining a healthy weight:** Being overweight causes other risk factors, such as diabetes and high blood pressure, to be more prevalent. Weight loss of as little as ten pounds is beneficial.
- **Managing stress:** Stress can cause a temporary escalation of blood pressure and also boost the blood's clotting tendencies. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle and using meditation or other relaxation techniques will help to control stress.
- **Drinking alcohol moderately or not at all:** Recent research indicates that moderate alcohol intake can increase your good cholesterol and lower your blood's clotting tendency. However, binge drinking and heavy alcohol consumption are both risk factors for stroke, so moderation is essential.
- **Avoiding illegal drugs:** Cocaine, amphetamines, heroin and crack cocaine have been shown to raise the risk of stroke.



www.myliferesource.com

Carebridge services are available to covered employees and their families at no cost to them. Contact Carebridge at any time by calling 800-437-0911 or emailing clientservice@carebridge.com