

# Prevent Stroke: What You Can Do

You can help prevent stroke by making healthy choices and controlling any health conditions you may have.

## **Healthy living**

Many strokes could be prevented through healthy lifestyle changes and working with your health care team to control health conditions that raise your risk for stroke.

You can help prevent stroke by making healthy lifestyle choices.

### **Take Action and Get Inspired**

Find tips and resources to help you make healthy choices that are right for you.

[“Start Small. Live Big”](#) This campaign encourages adults 55 and older, to get back on track with the small steps—like scheduling their medical appointments, getting active, and eating healthy—so they can get back to living big.

[“Live to the Beat”](#) This campaign focuses on empowering Black adults to pursue heart-healthy lifestyles on their own terms—to find what works best individually and consistently—as they live to their own beat.

### **Choose healthy foods and drinks**

Choosing healthy meal and snack options can help you prevent stroke. Be sure to eat plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables.

Eating foods low in saturated fats, trans fat, and cholesterol and high in fiber can help prevent high cholesterol. Limiting salt (sodium) in your diet can also lower your blood pressure. High cholesterol and high blood pressure increase your chances of having a stroke.

► For more information on healthy diet and nutrition, see [CDC’s Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity Program website](#).

## **Keep a healthy weight**

Having overweight or obesity increases your risk for stroke. To determine whether your weight is in a healthy range, doctors often calculate your [body mass index \(BMI\)](#). If you know your weight and height, you can calculate your BMI at [CDC's Assessing Your Weight website](#). Doctors sometimes also use waist and hip measurements to measure excess body fat.

## **Get regular physical activity**

Physical activity can help you stay at a healthy weight and lower your cholesterol and blood pressure levels. For adults, the surgeon general recommends 2 hours and 30 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity, such as a brisk walk, each week. Children and teens should get 1 hour of physical activity every day.

- ▶ Find [inspiration and tips for getting regular physical activity](#) from the “Live to the Beat” campaign.
- ▶ For more information, see [CDC's Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity website](#).

## **Don't smoke**

Cigarette smoking greatly increases your chances of having a stroke. If you don't smoke, don't start. If you do smoke, quitting will lower your risk for stroke. Your doctor can suggest ways to help you quit.

- ▶ For more information about tobacco use and quitting, see [CDC's Smoking & Tobacco Use website](#).

## **Limit alcohol**

Avoid drinking too much alcohol, which can raise your blood pressure. Men should have no more than two drinks per day, and women should have no more than one per day. For more information, visit [CDC's Alcohol and Public Health website](#).

## **Control your medical conditions**

Talk with your doctor about steps you can take to lower your risk for stroke.

If you have heart disease, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, or diabetes, you can take steps to lower your risk for stroke.

### **Check cholesterol**

Your doctor should test your cholesterol levels at least once every 5 years. Talk with your health care team about this simple blood test. If you have high cholesterol, medicine and lifestyle changes can help lower your risk for stroke.

### **Control blood pressure**

[High blood pressure](#) usually has no symptoms, so be sure to have it checked on a regular basis. Talk to your health care team about how often you should check your levels. You can check your blood pressure at home, at a doctor's office, or at a pharmacy.

If you have high blood pressure, your doctor might prescribe medicine, suggest some changes in your lifestyle, or recommend that you choose foods with lower sodium (salt).

### **Control diabetes**

If your doctor thinks you have symptoms of [diabetes](#), he or she may recommend that you get tested. If you have diabetes, check your blood sugar levels regularly.

Talk with your health care team about treatment options. Your doctor may recommend certain lifestyle changes, such as getting more physical activity or choosing healthier foods. These actions will help keep your blood sugar under good control and help lower your risk for stroke.

### **Treat heart disease**

If you have certain heart conditions, such as coronary artery disease or [atrial fibrillation](#) (irregular heartbeat), your health care team may recommend medical treatment or surgery. Taking care of heart problems can help prevent stroke.

### **Take your medicine**

If you take medicine to treat heart disease, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, or diabetes, follow your doctor's instructions carefully. Always ask questions if you don't understand something. Never stop taking your medicine without first talking to your doctor or pharmacist.

## **Work with your health care team**

You and your health care team can work together to prevent or treat the medical conditions that lead to stroke. Discuss your treatment plan regularly, and bring a list of questions to your appointments. Learn how to [find the right doctor for you](#) from the "Live to the Beat" campaign.

If you've already had a stroke or TIA, your health care team will work with you to prevent further strokes. Your treatment plan will include medicine or surgery and lifestyle changes to lower your risk for another stroke. Be sure to take your medicine as directed and follow your doctor's instructions.

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