

What is stroke?

A stroke occurs when blood flow to a certain part of the brain is suddenly blocked or when a blood vessel in the brain bursts. When this happens, the brain does not get the oxygen and nutrients it needs and damage to the brain results. Stroke is the third leading cause of death in the United States.

People who don't die from a stroke can have a lot of problems such as not being able to move part of their body, as well as speech and emotional changes. If stroke is treated within 3 hours, the risk of death and being disabled can be less.

Stroke symptoms appear suddenly, and often there is more than one symptom at the same time. Some major symptoms include:

- ◆ numbness or weakness of the face, arms, or legs
- ◆ confusion or trouble speaking or understanding others
- ◆ trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- ◆ trouble walking or loss of balance
- ◆ severe headache

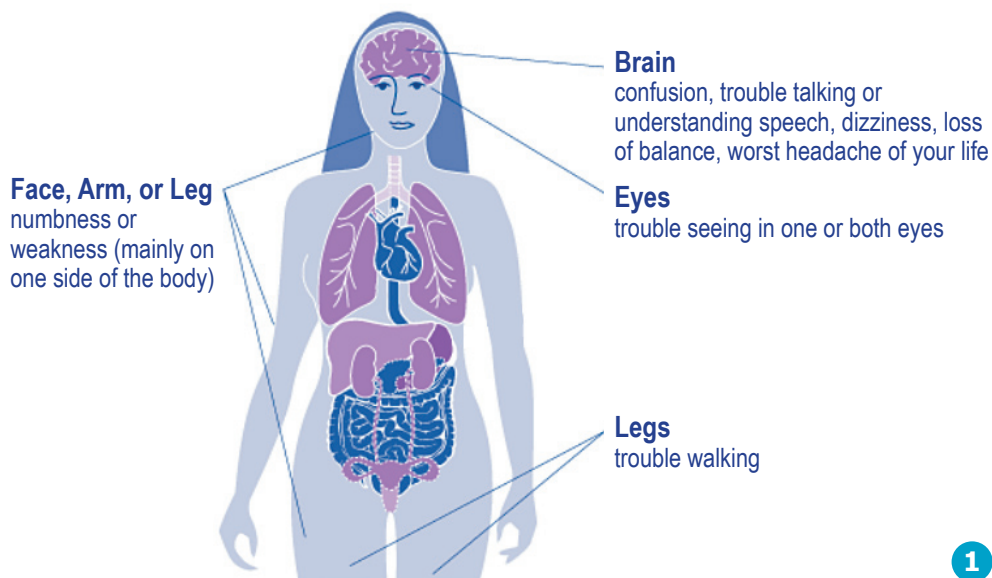
What are the risk factors for stroke?

Stroke is usually caused by a number of factors. The more risk factors one has, the greater the chance for having a stroke. Some risk factors cannot be changed or controlled, while other risk factors can be controlled.

◆ Risk factors you can control:

- High blood pressure (140/90 or above) is the most important risk factor
- Smoking or drinking more than 1 alcoholic drink a day
- Obesity
- Diabetes or heart disease
- Diet high in fat, calories, and cholesterol
- Lack of exercise

Signs of a Stroke



Stroke

◆ **Risk factors you cannot control:**

- Family history
- Over 55 years of age
- Men are more likely than women to have a stroke
- Previous stroke or 'mini-stroke. Mini-strokes are when a person has stroke-like symptoms for no longer than 24 hours then all the symptoms disappear.
- Being African American



How can I lower my risk for having a stroke?

- ◆ Talk to your healthcare provider about screening tests for a stroke. Ask about what you can do to decrease your risk for having a stroke.

Don't wait for symptoms. Talk to your healthcare provider about your family health history. Find out what you can do to reduce your risk of disease or detect it early.

- ◆ Stop smoking
- ◆ Do not drink more than 1 alcoholic drink a day.

- ◆ Get your blood pressure checked regularly.
- ◆ Keep a healthy weight by eating a well balanced diet. Include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat or fat-free dairy products, and lean meats in your diet.
- ◆ Cut back on foods high in cholesterol.
- ◆ Get at least 30 minutes of exercise every day.

For more information about stroke:

- ◆ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Stroke
www.cdc.gov/stroke
- ◆ American Stroke Association
www.strokeassociation.org