

# Preventing a Stroke

**You can help prevent stroke by making healthy choices and managing any medical conditions you might have.**

## Live a Healthy Lifestyle

- **Eat a healthy diet.** Choosing healthful meal and snack options can help you avoid stroke and its complications. Be sure to eat plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables. Eating foods low in saturated fat and cholesterol and high in fiber can help prevent high blood cholesterol. Limiting salt or sodium in your diet can also lower your blood pressure.
- **Maintain a healthy weight.** Being overweight or obese can increase your risk for stroke. To determine whether your weight is in a healthy range, doctors often calculate a number called the body mass index (BMI). Doctors sometimes also use waist and hip measurements to measure a person's excess body fat.
- **Be active.** Physical activity can help you maintain a healthy weight and lower cholesterol and blood pressure. The Surgeon General recommends that adults should engage in moderate-intensity exercise for at least 30 minutes on most days of the week.
- **Don't smoke.** Cigarette smoking greatly increases your risk for stroke. So, if you don't smoke, don't start. If you do smoke, quitting will lower your risk. Your doctor can suggest ways to help you quit.
- **Limit alcohol use.** Avoid drinking too much alcohol, which causes high blood pressure.

## Prevent or Treat Your Medical Conditions

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

- **Have your cholesterol checked.** Your health care provider should test your cholesterol levels at least once every five years. Talk with your doctor about this simple blood test.
- **Monitor your blood pressure.** High blood pressure has no symptoms, so be sure to have it checked on a regular basis.
- **Manage your diabetes.** If you have diabetes, closely monitor your blood sugar levels. Talk with your health care provider about treatment options.
- **Take your medicine.** If you're taking medication to treat high cholesterol, high blood pressure, or diabetes, follow your doctor's instructions carefully. Always ask questions if you don't understand something.
- **Talk with your health care provider.** You and your doctor can work together to prevent or treat the medical conditions that lead to heart disease. Discuss your treatment plan regularly and bring a list of questions to your appointments.