



American Heart Association®

Hard Hats with Heart™



Toolbox Talks

How to Prevent a Stroke

Preventing a Stroke

The good news is you have the power to reduce that risk. Take steps to build healthy habits like eating right, taking your medicines as prescribed and being as physically active as you're able. Every healthy choice brings you one step closer to preventing another stroke. Do these things to prevent a stroke:

- If you have high blood pressure, lower it. Measurement of 130/80 mm Hg and above is considered high blood pressure, work with your health care provider to manage it.
- Find out if you have atrial fibrillation (AFib). AFib is a quivering or irregular heartbeat that can lead to blood clots and cause a stroke. Your health care provider can tell you if you have AFib and help you manage it.
- If you smoke, stop. Smoking doubles the risk for stroke.
- If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation. Heavy drinking can increase your risk for stroke.
- Lower your cholesterol (the fat-like substance in your blood). Studies suggest ideal total cholesterol levels at about 150 mg/dL, which equals about 100 mg/dL for low-density lipoprotein cholesterol (LDL-C). Lower cholesterol levels are linked with lower rates of heart disease and stroke.
- If you have diabetes, follow your health care provider's advice carefully to get your blood sugar level under control. Having diabetes puts you at an increased risk for stroke. Talk to your health care provider about a diet that will help you manage your diabetes, such as limiting foods high in added sugars.
- Exercise daily. Even a little exercise—a brisk walk, swim or yard work—can improve your health and may reduce your stroke risk. Check with your health care provider before starting a new exercise regimen.
- Cut down on sodium and saturated and trans fat. By reducing these, you can lower your risk for stroke, high blood pressure and heart disease.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Should you take aspirin to prevent stroke?

You shouldn't take daily low-dose aspirin on your own without talking to your doctor. In some cases, there are serious risks that outweigh the benefits of aspirin. You should not start aspirin on your own.

Discussion Questions:

- Think about one thing you can do to help reduce your risk of a stroke. Would anyone like to share?