

Stroke Education

Stroke Prevention



A stroke results from a shortage of blood flow to the brain caused by a clot (ischemic stroke) or a rupture of a blood vessel (hemorrhagic stroke). When either of these things happens, brain cells begin to die and brain damage occurs. The brain cells most affected by the stroke do not recover. Some brain cells surrounding the damaged area of the brain may recover.

WHAT YOU CAN CHANGE:

- High blood pressure increases your chance of stroke by 4-6 times. Your blood pressure should be less than 130/80;
- Diabetes increases your risk of having a stroke by 2-4 times. Excess glucose in your blood stream can lead to fatty build up in your blood vessel (a clot) that leads to narrowing or blockage of your blood vessels. This blocks blood flow from getting to your brain and this causes a stroke.

WHAT YOU CANNOT CHANGE:

- Family history of blood vessel disease or stroke;
- Age – as you get older the risk of having a stroke increases;
- Sex – until women reach menopause, they have a lower risk of stroke than men;
- Ethnicity – First Nations people and those of African or South Asian descent are more likely to have high blood pressure and diabetes. They are at higher risk of stroke than the general population.

THERE ARE WAYS TO PREVENT HAVING ANOTHER STROKE. THESE INCLUDE:

- Check your blood pressure regularly, it should be less than 130/80 mmHg;
- Monitor your blood sugar levels, ideally they should be between 4-8;
- Maintain a healthy weight and be physically active;
- Decrease stress in your life;
- Visit your doctor regularly;
- Limit your alcohol consumption;
- Get back to your regular activities.

It is extremely important for you to take the medications that the doctor recommended when you were in the hospital after your stroke. Even if you feel well, do not stop taking your medication. If you have any questions about your medication speak with your doctor.

MEDICATIONS MAY BE PRESCRIBED TO:

- Prevent blood clots (Apixaban, Coumadin, Pradaxa);
- Regulate heart rhythm (Atenolol, Metoprolol, Norvasc);
- Lower blood pressure (Perindopril, Rampipril, Diovan);
- Lower bad cholesterol (Lipitor, Crestor, Zocor).

Another aspect of your life that can help to prevent another stroke is improving your eating habits and reducing your weight.

RESEARCH SHOWS THAT YOU CAN REDUCE YOUR RISK OF A SECOND STROKE BY:

- Eating fruits and vegetables with meals and snacks;
- Eating nuts, seeds, lentils and beans every day or at least a few times each week;
- Choosing low fat milk products;
- Reducing your salt intake to less than 1 teaspoon per day (2300 mg).

Having a healthy weight also significantly reduces your risk of a second stroke.

For more information, contact your West Park Neurological Rehabilitation Team, or consult your “My Guide for Stroke Recovery” which is available in English at <http://strokerecovery.guide>, and in Italian, Portuguese, Punjabi, and simplified Chinese at <http://strokerecovery.guide/about>.