

# Men and Stroke



Stroke is the fifth leading cause of death in men, killing almost the same number of men each year as prostate cancer and Alzheimer's disease combined. Stroke is a leading cause of long-term disability among American men. In addition, men have strokes at younger ages than women.

These facts are alarming, but there is some good news: Up to 80% of strokes can be prevented. This means it is important to know your risk of having a stroke and taking action to reduce that risk.

## What Is a Stroke?

A stroke, sometimes called a brain attack, occurs when blood flow to an area of the brain is cut off. When brain cells are starved of oxygen, they die. Stroke is a medical emergency. It's important to get treatment as soon as possible. A delay in treatment increases the risk of permanent brain damage or death.

## What Puts Men at Risk of Stroke?

- **High blood pressure** is a main risk factor for stroke, yet nearly one in three men with high blood pressure does not know he has it.
- Smoking damages blood vessels, which can cause a stroke. Men are more likely to be **smokers** than women.
- Being **overweight or obese** increases your risk of stroke. Almost 3 in 4 American men are in weight ranges that increase their risk for stroke.
- More men than women have been diagnosed with **diabetes**, which increases your risk of stroke because it can cause disease of blood vessels in the brain.
- Men are more likely than women to drink too much **alcohol**, increasing the risk for stroke.
- **Being inactive** can increase the risk of stroke. Only 1 in 4 men gets enough physical activity, even though exercising only 30 minutes a day can decrease the risk of stroke.

## Charles Stanley

Linda Stanley awoke to a loud noise in her home but was puzzled because she knew her husband Charles should have been at work. She searched the house and called his name, but she didn't hear any response. When she entered the living room, she found Charles lying on the floor. His work truck was still idling in the driveway. Linda wasted no time calling 9-1-1.

It turned out that Charles, who is African American, had a stroke even though he was only 52 years old. African-American men are at a greater risk of stroke than any other group of men and have strokes at younger ages.

"At first, I couldn't do anything. People on TV sounded like they were speaking a strange language," Charles remembers. "I got so frustrated!"

Charles spent 3 days in the intensive care unit and 4 weeks in a rehabilitation center. He worked with therapists to learn how to read, write, and walk again.

Charles realized that he had to make some changes in his lifestyle to avoid another stroke. He lost nearly 100 pounds and worked with his health care providers to get his blood pressure under control. He's also changed his eating habits and does an hour of cardio exercise every day.

Charles and Linda have advice for others at risk for stroke: "Take care of yourself. Get moving, lose weight, stop smoking—these steps will help people avoid a stroke," Charles recommends. His wife adds, "Know the signs of stroke. Be ready to call 9-1-1 if you think someone's having a stroke."

## How Can I Prevent Stroke?

Most strokes can be prevented by keeping medical conditions under control and making lifestyle changes. A good place to start is to know your **ABCS of heart health**:

- A Aspirin:** Aspirin may help reduce your risk for stroke. But you should check with your doctor before taking aspirin because it can make some types of stroke worse. Before taking aspirin, talk with your doctor about whether aspirin is right for you.
- B Blood Pressure:** Control your blood pressure.
- C Cholesterol:** Manage your cholesterol.
- S Smoking:** Quit smoking or don't start.

Make lifestyle changes:

- **Eat healthy and stay active.** Choose healthy foods most of the time, including foods with less salt, or sodium, to lower your blood pressure, and get regular exercise. Being overweight or obese raises your risk of stroke.
- **Talk to your doctor about your risk factors for stroke,** including your age and whether anyone in your family has had a stroke.
- **Get other health conditions under control,** such as diabetes or heart disease.

## What Is CDC Doing About Stroke?

CDC and its partners are leading national initiatives and programs to reduce the death and disability caused by stroke and to help men live longer, healthier lives.

- CDC's [Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention](#) provides resources to all 50 states to address heart disease and stroke.
- The [Paul Coverdell National Acute Stroke Program](#) funds states to measure, track, and improve the quality of care for stroke patients. The program works to reduce death and disabilities from stroke.
- The [Million Hearts®](#) initiative, which is co-led by CDC and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, works with other federal agencies and private sector partners to raise awareness about stroke prevention. Million Hearts® aims to prevent 1 million heart attacks and strokes by 2017.

## If Stroke Happens, Act F.A.S.T.

Knowing your chances of having a stroke is only half the battle. Strokes come on suddenly and should be treated as medical emergencies. If you think you or someone else may be having a stroke, act F.A.S.T.:



### F—Face:

Ask the person to smile. Does one side of the face droop?



### A—Arms:

Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?



### S—Speech:

Ask the person to repeat a simple phrase. Is the speech slurred or strange?



### T—Time:

If you see any of these signs, call 9-1-1 right away.

Calling an ambulance is critical because emergency medical technicians, or EMTs, can take you to a hospital that can treat stroke patients, and in some cases they can begin life-saving treatment on the way to the emergency room. Some treatments for stroke work only if given within the first 3 hours after symptoms start.

**Learn more by visiting [www.cdc.gov/stroke](http://www.cdc.gov/stroke)**