



**FREEDOM
HEALTH**

Stroke

made simple

Are You At Risk?

1

Count Your Risk Factors

- Cigarette smoking
- Low HDL cholesterol (less than 40 mg/dL)
- High blood pressure (140/90 mmHg or higher, or if you are on blood pressure medication)
- Family history of early heart disease (your father or brother before age 55, or your mother or sister before age 65)
- Age (55 or older)



2

Call 911 RIGHT AWAY if you see or have any of these warning signs:

- Sudden numbness or weakness in the face, arm, or leg-especially on one side of the body
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- Sudden problems seeing in one eye or both eyes
- Sudden dizziness, loss of balance or coordination, or trouble walking
- Sudden severe headache with no known cause

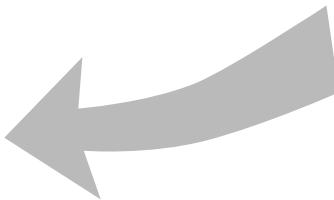


3

Other conditions that raise your risk for heart disease are physical inactivity and being overweight.

Find Out Your Risk Category

Female - If You Have	Male - If You Have	Your Risk Is
Heart disease, diabetes, or a risk score of 23 or more	Heart disease, diabetes, or a risk score of 16 or more	High
2 or more risk factors and a risk score of 20 - 22	2 or more risk factors and a risk score of 13 - 15	Moderate to High
2 or more risk factors and a risk score of 0 - 19	2 or more risk factors and a risk score of 0 - 12	Moderate
0 to 1 risk factor	0 to 1 risk factor	Low to Moderate



Find Out Your Risk Score. If you have two or more risk factors in Step 1, you will need to figure out your "risk score."

Male

		Age	Points
		60-64	10
		65-69	11
		70-74	12
		75-79	13
Age: 60-69		70-79	
Nonsmoker	0	0	
Smoker	1	1	

Total Cholesterol	Age 60-69	Age 70-79
<160	0 Points	0 Points
160-199	1 Point	0 Point
200-239	1 Point	0 Point
240-279	2 Points	1 Points
>280	3 Points	1 Points

HDL (mg/dl)	Points	HDL (mg/dl)	Points
60	-1	40-49	1
50-59	0	<40	2

Systolic BP (mmHg)	If Untreated	If Treated
<120	0 Points	0 Points
121-129	0 Points	1 Point
130-139	1 Point	2 Points
140-159	1 Point	2 Points
>160	2 Points	3 Points

Female

		Age	Points
		60-64	10
		65-69	12
		70-74	14
		75-79	16
Age: 60-69		70-79	
Nonsmoker	0	0	
Smoker	2	1	

Total Cholesterol	Age 60-69	Age 70-79
<160	0 Points	0 Points
160-199	1 Point	1 Point
200-239	2 Points	1 Point
240-279	3 Points	2 Points
>280	3 Points	2 Points

HDL (mg/dl)	Points	HDL (mg/dl)	Points
60	-1	40-49	1
50-59	0	<40	2

Systolic BP (mmHg)	If Untreated	If Treated
<120	0 Points	0 Points
121-129	1 Point	3 Points
130-139	2 Points	4 Points
140-159	3 Points	5 Points
>160	4 Points	6 Points

Source: The Framingham Heart Study Point Scores

Stroke made simple

Stroke is the 3rd leading cause of death in the US after heart disease and cancer. It is a major cause of physical and mental disabilities in older adults. Every year, more and more people are affected when they or someone they know has a stroke.

Stroke is an emergency

Never ignore the warning signs of stroke. The warning signs of a stroke may last only a few minutes and then go away. When this happens, it could be a mini-stroke, which is called a TIA (transient ischemic attack). This is also a medical emergency that requires attention right away. An unrecognized and untreated TIA can be followed within hours by a major disabling stroke. Always pay attention to any stroke symptoms, even if they are fleeting.

What is a Stroke?

A stroke happens when blood can't flow to a part of the brain. When the brain doesn't get the oxygen and nutrients it needs from the blood, its cells are damaged or begin to die. If brain cells are only hurt, they sometimes can be repaired. But brain cells that have died can't be brought back to life. This means that the brain may stop sending signals to other parts of the body that control things like speaking, thinking, and walking.

There are two major types of strokes. The most common kind (ischemic) is caused by blood clots or the narrowing of a blood vessel (artery) leading to the brain. The clot keeps blood from flowing into other regions of the brain and prevents needed oxygen and nutrients from reaching brain cells in these regions. The second major kind of stroke (hemorrhagic) happens when a broken blood vessel (artery) causes bleeding in the brain. This break also stops oxygen and nutrients from reaching brain cells.

What If It Is a Stroke?

Recovery from a stroke is most successful if

treatment begins within the first three hours after symptoms appear. The clotbusting drug t-PA can greatly lower the damage caused by a stroke, but it must be given within the three hour time frame.

Getting to the hospital as soon as possible allows time for a CT scan of the brain. This scan will show whether t-PA is the right treatment. Only patients with ischemic stroke, caused by a clot, are candidates for this treatment. The doctor will diagnose stroke based on the patient's symptoms, medical history, and medical tests that let doctors look closely at the brain to see the type and location of the stroke.

There are many different ways to help people recover from a stroke. Drugs and physical therapy work to improve balance, coordination, and other deficits from the stroke such as speech and language problems. Occupational therapy can make it easier to do things like bathing and cooking. Many therapies start in the hospital and continue at home. A family doctor can provide follow-up care.

Progress is different for each person. Some people recover fully soon after a stroke. Others take months or even years. Sometimes the damage is so serious that therapy cannot help at all.

Lower Your Risk Of a Stroke

Talk to your doctor about what you can do to lower your risk of stroke. Even if you're in perfect health, follow these important suggestions:

- **Control your blood pressure.** Have your blood pressure checked often. If it is high, follow your doctor's advice to lower it. Treating high blood pressure lowers the risk of both stroke and heart disease.
- **Stop smoking.** Smoking is linked to increased risk for stroke. Quitting smoking at any age lowers the risk for stroke as well as for a lot of other serious diseases.

- **Exercise regularly.** Activities such as brisk walking, riding a bicycle, swimming, and yard work lower the risk of both stroke and heart disease. Researchers think that exercise may make the heart stronger and improve blood flow. Before you start a vigorous exercise program, be sure to check with your doctor.

- **Eat healthy foods.** Eat foods that are low in fats, cholesterol, and saturated fatty acids. Include a variety of fruits and vegetables in your daily diet.

- **Control your diabetes.** If you have diabetes, work with your doctor to get it under control. Untreated diabetes can damage blood vessels and lead to a build up of fatty deposits in the arteries (atherosclerosis). This narrows arteries and blocks normal blood flow. A blocked artery will lead to a stroke.

Consult your doctor for more information.

About Freedom Health

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Your health is important. Your health plan choice is important. With so many benefit choices out there, picking the right plan may be complicated. If you have any questions, please call us for more information.



1-888-796-0946
TTY/TDD 800-955-8771
Monday - Friday, 8 AM to 8 PM

Sources:

National Institute on Aging, www.nia.nih.gov.
The Framingham Heart Study

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