



# Stroke Symptoms and Risk Factors

During a stroke, blood stops flowing to part of the brain. This can damage areas in the brain that control the rest of the body. Call 911 and get help right away if any of these symptoms come on suddenly, even if the symptoms don't last.

## Know the symptoms of a stroke

- **Weakness.** You may feel a sudden weakness, tingling, or a loss of feeling on one side of your face or body including your arm or leg.
- **Vision problems.** You may have sudden double vision or trouble seeing in one or both eyes.
- **Speech problems.** You may have sudden trouble talking, slurred speech, or problems understanding others.

- **Headache.** You may have a sudden, severe headache.
- **Movement problems.** You may have sudden trouble walking, dizziness, a feeling of spinning, a loss of balance, a feeling of falling, or blackouts.
- **Seizure.** You may also have a seizure with a large or hemorrhagic stroke.

**Remember:** If you have any of these symptoms, call 911 and your doctor as soon as possible.

F.A.S.T. is an easy way to remember the signs of a stroke. When you see these signs, you will know that you need to call 911 fast.

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## F.A.S.T. stands for:

- **F** is for face drooping. One side of the face is drooping or numb. When the person smiles, the smile is uneven.
- **A** is for arm weakness. One arm is weak or numb. When the person lifts both arms at the same time, one arm may drift downward.
- **S** is for speech difficulty. You may notice slurred speech or difficulty speaking. The person can't repeat a simple sentence correctly when asked.
- **T** is for time to dial 911. If someone shows any of these symptoms, even if they go away, call 911 right away. Make note of the time the symptoms first appeared.

## Risk Factors for Stroke

Certain health and lifestyle issues—called risk factors—increase your chances of having a stroke. The leading risk factor for stroke is high blood pressure. But there are many other factors that also put you at risk. This page helps you identify which risk factors you have. That way, you know where you need to make healthy changes. Talk to your healthcare provider about ways to help reduce your risk factors.

## What are your risk factors?

Risk factors are different for each person. Check next to the factors that apply to you. Keep in mind that some factors, such as your age, can't be changed. But others can be managed.

## Health risk factors

- You have high blood pressure.
- You're overweight.

- You have unhealthy cholesterol levels.
- You have atrial fibrillation.
- You have atrial flutter.
- You've had a heart attack.
- You have narrowed arteries.
- You have diabetes.
- You are a man.
- You are an African-American, Alaska Native, or American Indian.

## Lifestyle risk factors

- You rarely exercise.
- You often eat salty, fried, or greasy foods.
- You smoke.
- You have more than 2 alcoholic drinks per day.

## Age and family history

- You're over age 60.
- A parent, brother, or sister has had a stroke.

## Metabolic syndrome raises risk

Any of the factors above puts you at increased risk of stroke. But having 3 or more of certain risk factors (a condition called metabolic syndrome) multiplies your risk. These factors include too much weight around your waist, high blood pressure, high blood sugar, and unhealthy cholesterol levels. If you're a woman, your risks may also include polycystic ovary syndrome. If you have any of these risk factors, be sure to talk to your healthcare provider about how to decrease your risk of stroke and improve your overall health.

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