All about Stroke

Two out of three people with diabetes die from stroke or heart disease. During National Stroke Awareness Month this May, learn about the warning signs and how you can lower your risk.

What is a stroke?

A stroke happens when the blood supply to part of your brain is suddenly interrupted. Then brain tissue is damaged. Most strokes happen because a blood clot blocks a blood vessel in the brain or neck. A stroke can cause movement problems, pain, numbness, and problems with thinking, remembering, or speaking. Some people also have emotional problems, such as depression, after a stroke.

What does diabetes have to do with strokes?

If you have diabetes, your chances of having a stroke are 2 to 4 times higher than in people who don’t have diabetes. But you can lower your risk by taking care of your health.

How do I know whether I’m at high risk for a stroke?

Having diabetes raises your risk for stroke. But your risk is even greater if

- you’re over age 55
- your family background is African American
- you’ve already had a stroke or a transient ischemic (ih-SKEE-mik) attack (also called a TIA or a mini stroke)
- you have a family history of stroke or TIAs
- you have heart disease
- you have high blood pressure
- you’re overweight
- you have high LDL (bad) cholesterol and low HDL (good) cholesterol levels
- you smoke

You can’t change some of these risk factors. But you can lower your chances of having a stroke by taking care of your diabetes and tackling some of the other risk factors, such as losing weight if you’re overweight. It’s up to you.

How can I lower my risk of having a stroke?

Lower your risk by keeping your blood glucose (sugar), blood pressure, and cholesterol on target with healthy eating, physical activity, and, if needed, medicine. And if you smoke, quit. Every step you take will help. The closer your numbers are to your targets, the better your chances of preventing a stroke.
What are the warning signs of a stroke?

Typical warning signs of a stroke develop suddenly and can include:

- weakness or numbness on one side of the body
- sudden confusion or trouble understanding
- trouble talking
- dizziness, loss of balance, or trouble walking
- trouble seeing out of one or both eyes
- double vision
- severe headache

If you have warning signs of a stroke, call 9-1-1 right away. Getting treatment as soon as possible after a stroke can help prevent permanent damage to your brain.

Review the symptoms of a stroke with your family and friends. Make sure they know about the importance of calling 9-1-1.

If the blood flow to your brain is blocked for a short time, you might have one or more of the warning signs temporarily, meaning you’ve had a TIA(mini-stroke). TIA’s put you at risk for a stroke in the future.