

High blood pressure and stroke

What is stroke

A stroke occurs when the supply of blood to the brain is suddenly disrupted by a clot, plaque or a bleed when an artery bursts. When blood stops flowing, the brain does not receive oxygen it needs and therefore brain cells in the area die and permanent damage may be done. The good news is stroke is largely preventable and treatable.

What is blood pressure?

Blood pressure is the pressure of your blood on the walls of your arteries as your heart pumps (systolic) and relaxes (diastolic).

Although blood pressure can vary throughout the day such as during exercise or with stress, our body aims to maintain our blood pressure in a tight range.

Sustained high blood pressure (hypertension) puts a strain on blood vessels over time and is an important risk factor for stroke. It is the most preventable cause of stroke worldwide.

What causes high blood pressure?

There are a number of risk factors that have been linked to high blood pressure. These include:

- A family history of high blood pressure.
- Getting older
- Men are more likely to have high blood pressure than women.

- Being overweight.
- Lack of exercise.
- Drinking alcohol.
- Smoking.
- Diabetes.
- A diet high in salt. All types of salt that contain sodium can significantly impact blood pressure.

Why does blood pressure matter?

High blood pressure puts a strain on blood vessels all over the body, including the arteries that lead to the brain. This means the heart has to work much harder to keep the blood circulation going.

High blood pressure can lead to a stroke in several ways:

- It damages blood vessel walls and makes them weaker which can then burst leading to a bleed in the brain.
- It can cause blood clots or plaques to break off artery walls and block a brain artery.
- It can speed up common forms of heart disease such as an irregular heart rhythm (Atrial Fibrillation) which can lead to clots forming and travelling to the brain.

Know your numbers*	Recommended action
<input type="checkbox"/> Severe blood pressure BP 180/100mmHg or higher	IMMEDIATE ACTION – DO NOT IGNORE See your doctor urgently.
<input type="checkbox"/> High blood pressure BP 140/90mmHg or higher	SEE YOUR DOCTOR FOR A FULL RISK ASSESSMENT Please take this brochure to your doctor.
<input type="checkbox"/> Normal blood pressure BP 120-140/80-90mmHg	MONITOR YOUR RISK FACTORS If you have identified other risk factors or your BP is at the high end of this range, talk to your doctor about a full risk assessment at your next appointment.
<input type="checkbox"/> Optimal blood pressure BP 120/80mmHg or lower	MONITOR YOUR RISK FACTORS If you have identified other risk factors above talk to your doctor about what you can do to stay healthy.

*This is an assessment only considering blood pressure risk. You should also consider if you have other factors listed above (such as smoking, older age etc) which will increase your risk of stroke, heart disease or type 2 diabetes. Please consult your doctor for a full risk assessment.

High blood pressure is treatable

It is important to see your doctor immediately if your blood pressure is greater than 160/100mmHg.

If you have high blood pressure or multiple risk factors for heart disease or stroke, your doctor may recommend medication, lifestyle changes or a mix of both to lower your blood pressure.

Medication does not cure high blood pressure, it can only help control it. Most people who are treated for high blood pressure will need to keep taking medication over a lifetime.

4.7 million
Australians
live with
**HIGH BLOOD
PRESSURE**



Things you can do to lower your risk

There are a number of factors you can control to help reduce your blood pressure and chances of having a stroke.

- **Know your blood pressure.** The lower your blood pressure the lower your risk of stroke. Get it checked by a GP or Pharmacist.
- **Healthy eating.** Enjoy a variety of foods especially plant based foods including fresh fruit and vegetables, legumes and wholegrain breads and cereals.
- **Get active.** Try to engage in at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity on most days of the week. Every move counts, through being active at a higher intensity will result in a greater health benefit.
- **Drop the salt.** The more fresh food you eat, the less salt you'll get. Don't add salt when you cook or when you eat. Check the salt content in all processed foods and aim for 400mg/100g of sodium or less.
- **Avoid alcohol.** Your doctor can talk to you about alcohol and your stroke risk.
- **Be smoke-free.** Quit smoking. Call Quitline on 13 7848.

Signs of stroke

F.A.S.T. is an easy way to remember and recognise the signs of stroke.

Learn the F.A.S.T. signs of STROKE



FACE
drooped?



ARMS
can't be raised?



SPEECH
slurred or confused?



TIME
is critical! Call 000.

If you see any of these signs
Act FAST call 000 (triple zero)



About us

Stroke Foundation partners with the community to prevent, treat and beat stroke. We do this through raising awareness, facilitating research and supporting survivors of stroke.

Contact us

StrokeLine 1800 STROKE (1800 787 653)

strokefoundation.org.au

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