

# WHAT IS YOUR RISK FOR STROKE?



## Uncontrollable Stroke Risk Factors

**AGE:** Are you over age 55?  YES  NO

*The chances of having a stroke go up with age. Two-thirds of all strokes happen to people who are over age 65. Stroke risk doubles every 10 years past age 55.*

**SEX:** Are you male?  YES  NO

*Men have a slightly higher stroke risk than women. However, because women in the U.S. live longer than men, most stroke survivors over age 65 are women.*

**FAMILY HISTORY:** Does your family have a history of stroke?  YES  NO

*Although actual risk varies, people with a family history of stroke are at risk for stroke themselves.*

**PERSONAL HISTORY OF DIABETES:** Do you have diabetes?  YES  NO

*People with diabetes have a high stroke risk. The high risk may be due to circulation problems caused by diabetes.*

**RACE:** Are you of African-American or Hispanic descent?  YES  NO

*African Americans and some Hispanics have two to three times the stroke risk of most other racial groups. This higher risk may be due to diet, more high blood pressure, and/or diabetes.*

**PREVIOUS TIA OR STROKE:** Have you already had a TIA or stroke?  YES  NO

*Transient Ischemic Attacks, also called TIAs or mini-strokes, are brief episodes of stroke symptoms that usually last for only a few minutes. Symptoms may include weakness, numbness, speech changes, and blindness. Unlike stroke, TIAs do not result in permanent brain damage. TIAs should never be ignored! More than one-third of all people who experience TIAs will go on to have a stroke. If you already had a stroke, you may be up to 10 times more likely to have another.*

## Controllable Stroke Risk Factor

**SMOKING:** Do you smoke?  YES  NO

*Smoking doubles your risk for stroke. It speeds up hardening of the arteries, increases the chance for blood clots to form, and raises your blood pressure. The good news is that if you quit smoking today, your stroke risk from this factor may decrease significantly.*

**ALCOHOL:** Do you take more than two alcoholic drinks a day?  YES  NO

*Studies show that drinking alcohol in moderation—up to two drinks per day—may reduce your risk for stroke by almost half. However, drinking more than two drinks per day may increase your risk for stroke by as much as three times. Because alcohol is a drug which can interact with medication you are taking, we recommend that you discuss alcohol use with your provider. Drinking alcohol can lead to other health and lifestyle problems, so if you don't drink, don't start.*

**WEIGHT:** Are you overweight?  YES  NO

*Excess weight puts a strain on the entire circulatory system. It also makes people more likely to have other stroke risk factors such as high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and diabetes. Excess weight can be reduced with changes in diet and exercise.*

**HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE:** Is your blood pressure consistently more than 135/85?  YES  NO

*Having high blood pressure or hypertension makes you four to six times more likely to have a stroke. Blood pressure is the single most controllable stroke risk factor. High blood pressure affects about 50 million American adults or about one-third of the population. Blood pressure can be lowered with a combination of several treatments: losing weight, stopping smoking, exercising, and taking medication. Low salt diets and/or adding moderate amounts of potassium may help some people.*

**If you answered "YES" to any of the above risk factors, the Department of Veterans Affairs Stroke QUERI Center recommends a visit to your provider (doctor, nurse practitioner, physician's assistant) to discuss your personal risk and develop a prevention plan.**



## Prevention Is The Best Way To A Stroke-Free Life