



strokefoundation

Stop stroke. Save lives. End suffering.

High blood pressure and stroke



stroke safe
for life

Brought to you by the National Stroke Foundation

About Us

The National Stroke Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation that works with the public, government, health professionals, patients, carers and stroke survivors to reduce the impact of stroke on the Australian community.

Our challenge is to save 110,000 Australians from death and disability due to stroke over 10 years.

We will achieve this by:

- Educating the public about the risk factors and signs of stroke and promoting healthy lifestyles.
- Working with all stakeholders to develop and implement policy on the prevention and management of stroke.
- Encouraging the development of comprehensive and coordinated services for all stroke survivors and their families.
- Encouraging and facilitating stroke research.

StrokeLine: **1800 787 653**

Email: admin@strokefoundation.com.au

Website: www.strokefoundation.com.au

ABN 420 061 733 7

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If you have already had a stroke or a transient ischaemic attack (TIA), the use of the blood pressure lowering drug perindopril in combination with indapamide has been shown to reduce the chance of a further stroke. This is also true for stroke survivors who have 'normal' blood pressure.

It is important to take your blood pressure medication as prescribed. Do not make decisions about stopping your medication without talking to your doctor.

StrokeLine

The National Stroke Foundation's StrokeLine provides information about stroke prevention, recovery and support.

Our qualified health professionals are here for you when you need comprehensive information and help.

Remember, stroke is largely preventable, so contact us today to discover the changes you can make to reduce your risk of stroke.

Call our toll free service on **1800 787 653** (open business hours EST across Australia, a message service is available outside these hours). If you leave a message, a health professional will return your call the next working day

How can you help?

Stroke is responsible for 1 in 10 deaths in Australia. We need to raise urgently needed funds to continue our work in a number of areas to reduce the incidence and burden of stroke in Australia.

Please show your support and donate today.

Visit www.strokefoundation.com.au
or call **1300 194 196**.

A few simple things to remember that will help keep your blood pressure down:

- **Drop the salt!** and cut down on takeaway foods and don't add salt at the table or when cooking.
- Healthy eating – enjoy a variety of foods especially plant based foods including fresh fruit and vegetables, legumes and wholegrain breads and cereals.
- Get active and try to exercise regularly, at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise on most days of the week is recommended.*
- Limit your alcohol intake. A moderate amount of alcohol can lower your risk of stroke but more alcohol may be harmful to your health. Stay within recommended limits for drinking alcohol.
- Be smokefree and quit smoking. Call Quit on **131 848**
- Know your blood pressure numbers; remember the lower your blood pressure, the lower your risk of stroke. One of the most important things you can do is to have your blood pressure checked regularly and confirmed by your doctor.

Blood pressure medications

If you have high blood pressure, or your overall risk of stroke is high because you have multiple stroke risk factors, your doctor may prescribe medications to lower your blood pressure. There are many blood pressure medications and your doctor may need to increase the dose or use these medications in combination to reduce your blood pressure.

Some people will require a number of different ways to lower their blood pressure (medication and lifestyle changes). However, medication does not cure high blood pressure, it can only help control it. Most people who are treated will need to keep taking medication over a lifetime.

* Note some types of exercises should be avoided by people with high blood pressure – please ask your doctor about what is best for you.

What is a stroke?

A stroke is not a heart attack. A stroke occurs when the supply of blood to the brain is suddenly disrupted. Blood is carried to the brain by blood vessels called arteries. Blood may stop moving through an artery because the artery is blocked by a clot or plaque, or because the artery breaks or bursts.

When blood is stopped, the brain cannot get the oxygen it needs, brain cells in the area die and the brain can become permanently damaged.

What are the risk factors for stroke?

Stroke risk is influenced by many factors. Some factors such as age, gender and a family history of stroke, cannot be controlled.

However, there are a number of others that you can control to help reduce your chances of having a stroke. These include:

- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Being overweight
- Excessive alcohol
- Smoking
- Poor diet and inactivity
- Diabetes
- Atrial fibrillation

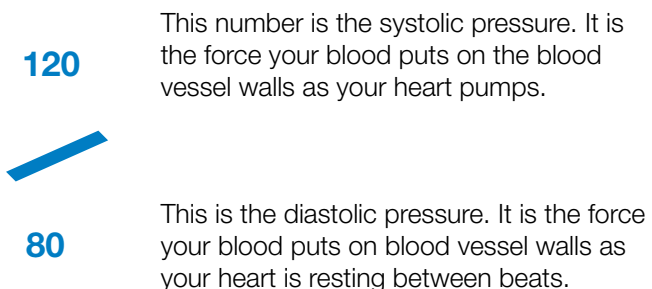
The more risk factors you have, the higher your chances of having a stroke. Individuals with the highest risk of stroke include those with multiple risk factors and those who have already suffered a transient ischaemic attack (TIA), stroke or heart attack.

What is blood pressure?

Blood pressure is a measurement of the force your blood puts on blood vessel walls as it travels through your body.

High blood pressure is the most important risk factor for stroke.

Your blood pressure is expressed with two numbers; for example 120/80.



| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| HIGH TO VERY HIGH | = $\frac{140}{90}$ to $\frac{180}{110}$ or higher |
| NORMAL TO HIGH | = $\frac{120}{80}$ to $\frac{140}{90}$ |
| NORMAL | = $\frac{120}{80}$ or lower |

When your blood pressure is consistently equal to or over 140/90. This is known as ‘hypertension’.

Blood pressure varies throughout the day and if the reading is high, your doctor may measure your blood pressure on a number of occasions. You may be asked to monitor your blood pressure at home. There are a number of different blood pressure devices you may use to do this. Talk to your doctor about what is best for you.

Why does high blood pressure matter?

Doctors sometimes call high blood pressure the ‘silent killer’ because sufferers can have high blood pressure and show no warning signs. If untreated, high blood pressure will increase the risk of stroke, heart attack and kidney failure

High blood pressure can have many harmful effects which can eventually lead to stroke; for example:

- High blood pressure puts unnecessary stress on blood vessel walls, causing the blood vessel to thicken and break down, eventually leading to a stroke.
- High blood pressure can speed up common forms of heart disease that can lead to stroke.
- High blood pressure can increase pressure on the walls of blood vessels taking blood to the brain and weaken them, leading to a bleed in the brain known as a haemorrhagic stroke.
- High blood pressure can also cause blood clots or plaque (cholesterol and other fat like substances) to break off artery walls and block a brain artery causing a stroke.
- High blood pressure can cause a haemorrhagic stroke in people who were born with irregular formation of the vessel walls in the brain.

Previous stroke or transient ischaemic attack (TIA)

Individuals with the highest risk of stroke include those with multiple risk factors and those who have already suffered a TIA, stroke or heart attack.

It is recommended that blood pressure be maintained below 140/190 mmHg. However, reduction in blood pressure, irrespective of initial blood pressure levels, has been shown to reduce the recurrence of stroke and other vascular events.

Reducing blood pressure is particularly important for patients who have diabetes where levels should be below 130/85 mmHg.

Changing your lifestyle to lower your blood pressure and risk of stroke

You don’t have to rely on medication alone to control your blood pressure. There are a number of lifestyle changes you can make to help lower your blood pressure and risk of stroke.

Some people with mild hypertension are able to control their blood pressure simply by making healthy lifestyle changes. Lifestyle changes not only lower blood pressure, they can increase the effectiveness of blood pressure medication and reduce risk of stroke, heart attack and diabetes.