

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**.

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

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strokefoundation

Stop stroke. Save lives. End suffering.

High cholesterol and stroke



stroke
safe
for life

Brought to you by the National Stroke Foundation

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 stops flowing, the brain does not receive the oxygen it needs, and therefore brain cells in the area die and permanent damage may be done. Some strokes are fatal while others cause permanent or temporary disability. Some people are able to make a full recovery after a stroke.

Stroke is the second single greatest killer and one of the leading causes of disability amongst adults in Australia

What is cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a type of fat our bodies produce, however we also absorb it when we eat animal food products such as meat and dairy.

Our arteries carry blood through our body and too much cholesterol in the blood can cause a build up of fat in the walls of the arteries. This build up narrows or blocks the arteries which, in turn, can stop the flow of blood or cause blood clots.

There are two types of cholesterol which make up our total cholesterol. Low density lipoprotein (LDL) is the 'bad' cholesterol that builds up on the artery walls. High density lipoprotein (HDL) is the 'good' cholesterol that takes cholesterol from the cells in our body to the liver where it is broken down and removed safely from our body.

What causes high cholesterol?

The main cause of high cholesterol is a diet high in saturated fats (fat from animal foods). High cholesterol may also be hereditary.

The link between high cholesterol and stroke

Blood is carried to the brain through a series of large arteries in the neck and then by smaller arteries inside the head. Stroke is usually caused by a sudden blockage to the arteries carrying blood to parts of the brain.

Stroke can cause damage to the brain which can then lead to death or long term disability. When there is an excess of cholesterol in the artery walls, arteries can narrow or a complete blockage can occur in the artery. This disease in the arteries is known as atherosclerosis.

High cholesterol is a risk factor for stroke, however you need to be aware that it is one of many risk factors, including diabetes, high cholesterol, irregular heart beat, and other lifestyle choices.

At narrow points in the arteries, blood clots can form and either block the arteries or break off, travelling in the blood to lodge in smaller arteries. Occasionally, pieces of cholesterol will break off the artery wall and lodge in smaller arteries producing blockages. This process is called embolism.

While high cholesterol is commonly associated with blockages in the arteries causing a heart attack, high cholesterol can also narrow the brain arteries and lead to a stroke. There is evidence that a person can lower their risk of stroke by lowering their cholesterol.

You can control cholesterol with a combination of diet, exercise and medication.

- **Maintain a healthy diet** which is low in animal fats and high in fruit and vegetables. Choose vegetable oils and spreads like margarine or olive oil. Eat fish (fresh or canned) regularly and select lean meat. Limit take away food and foods high in cholesterol (eg. full fat dairy products, fatty meats, egg yolks and offal).
- **Be physically active.** Try to do at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity most days of the week. Talk to your doctor about an exercise program.

Lower cholesterol, lower your risk of stroke

Your doctor may prescribe some medication to lower your cholesterol. You should not stop taking your medication or change the amount you take without talking to your doctor. Your doctor can provide valuable information about your risk of stroke and how to control it. You can also lower your chances of stroke by controlling other risk factors.

- Don't smoke.
- Loose weight if you are overweight.
- Limit alcohol intake. A moderate amount of alcohol (One glass a day for women, two glasses per day for men) can lower your risk of stroke but more alcohol may be harmful to your health.
- Keep your blood pressure low with a low salt diet, physical activity and, if required, medication.