

# STROKE: RISK FACTORS & PREVENTATIVE SCREENING

*Do you know the number one cause of adult disability?  
You may be surprised to learn the answer is stroke.  
According to the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke,  
795,000 Americans have a stroke every year, of which many are temporary or  
permanently disabled.*



*Disability results from the effects stroke has on the brain.  
When a person has a stroke, blood circulation to the brain gets cut off.  
This can occur from a blockage or from bleeding into the brain.  
The severity of the stroke-induced disability depends on a variety of factors, including how long the brain  
was cut off from blood flow.*

## UNDERSTANDING WARNING SIGNS OF STROKE

Understanding the brain and the warning signs it sends when oxygen is cut off is also crucial. The most common warning signs are called **FAST**:

- F**acial drooping, usually only one side that will droop downwards and be difficult to move.
- A**rm weakness, which causes an inability to lift up one arm fully.
- S**peech difficulty, difficulty or inability to produce words.
- T**ime, if these symptoms are present immediately call 911.

Pay attention to any warning signs of stroke - even if they eventually go away on their own. Such signs could signal a transient ischemic attack, also called a "**mini-stroke**". Seek medical attention immediately if you or a loved one exhibits the symptoms of stroke listed above.

## STROKE PREVENTION

One way to help prevent a stroke is to know and understand the risk factors that can lead to stroke. So what **RISK FACTORS** put you at higher risk for experiencing a stroke, besides disease of course?

- Age
- Gender
- Race
- Family history
- High blood pressure
- Smoking
- Heart disease
- Unhealthy diet
- High cholesterol
- Diabetes
- Lack of physical activity

## CAROTID ARTERY ULTRASOUND SCREENING

The carotid arteries are a pair of blood vessels located on both sides of your neck that deliver blood from your heart to your brain and head.

Carotid arteries are usually narrowed by a buildup of plaque — made up of fat, cholesterol, calcium and other substances that circulate in the bloodstream. Ischemic stroke occurs when a blood clot blocks or plugs an artery leading to the brain. A blood clot often forms in arteries damaged by the buildup of plaques (atherosclerosis). It can occur in the carotid arteries of the neck as well as other arteries. Early diagnosis and treatment of a narrowed carotid artery can decrease stroke risk.

Carotid ultrasound is a safe, painless procedure that uses sound waves to examine the blood flow through the carotid arteries to test for blocked or narrowed carotid arteries, which can increase the risk of stroke. The results can help your doctor determine a treatment to lower your stroke risk.

**Carotid artery ultrasound screenings are recommended for anyone over the age of 50 and those over 40 with 2 or more risk factors. (Listed above)**

## **BENEFITS OF SCREENING**

Preventative Screening can provide meaningful benefits for your body and mind that could give you a healthier advantage in your everyday life:

- Early detection of serious conditions
- Prevention of disease progression
- Peace of mind so you can enjoy life
- Control, no insurance required

## **HOW IT WORKS**

A technician (sonographer) conducts the test with a small, hand-held device called a transducer. The transducer emits sound waves and records the echo as the waves bounce off tissues, organs and blood cells. A computer translates the echoed sound waves into a live-action image on a monitor. A doctor who specializes in imaging tests (radiologist) will review your test results, then prepare a report for your doctor. In a follow-up office visit, your doctor will explain to you what the carotid ultrasound revealed and what that means for you.

If the test reveals you're at risk of a stroke, your doctor may recommend the following therapies, depending on the severity of blockage in your arteries:

- Eat a healthy diet, including fruits, vegetables and whole-grain breads and cereals, and limit saturated fat.
- Exercise regularly.
- Keep a healthy weight.
- Don't smoke and avoid secondhand smoke.
- Take medications to lower blood cholesterol and blood pressure.
- Take medications to prevent blood clots.
- Have a surgical procedure to remove carotid artery plaques (carotid endarterectomy).
- Have a surgical procedure to open up and support your carotid arteries (carotid angioplasty and stenting).

## **DURING THE PROCEDURE**

**A carotid ultrasound screening usually takes about 5 minutes.**

You'll likely lie on your back during the ultrasound. The ultrasound technician (sonographer) may position your head to better access the side of your neck. The sonographer will apply a warm gel to your skin above the site of each carotid artery. The gel helps transmit the ultrasound waves back and forth. The sonographer then gently presses the transducer against the side of your neck. You shouldn't feel any discomfort during the procedure. If you do, tell the sonographer.

## **9 OUT OF 10 CARDIOVASCULAR DOCTORS SUPPORT PREVENTIVE HEALTH SCREENINGS**

In a 2014 study nine out of 10 specialists on the front lines of fighting vascular disease identified preventive screening for cardiovascular disease as a valuable health tool for patients with two-plus risk factors. Screenings help you identify those risk factors and the threat they pose to your health before it's too late.

## **FREE BLOOD PRESSURE & CAROTID ARTERY ULTRASOUND SCREENINGS WILL BE AVAILABLE DURING CHECK-IN AT CONVOCATION**

*Stroke prevention lies in your hands, what are your risk factors and can they be reduced? A preventive health screening, followed by an appointment with your doctor to review results can help answer this question.*