

Preventing Ischemic Stroke



You can reduce your risk of ischemic stroke or transient ischemic attack (TIA). The best way to protect yourself from a recurrent stroke or TIA is to understand what factors increase your risk and how to control them. You can work with your doctor to treat and control many of your personal risk factors for stroke.

What risk factors can I help control?

- High blood pressure
- Diabetes
- High cholesterol
- Obesity
- Lack of physical activity
- Diet high in concentrated sugar and saturated fat
- Tobacco use
- High alcohol intake
- Illegal drug use

What steps can I take to reduce my risk factors?

1. Control your blood pressure

High blood pressure (called **hypertension**) is the leading cause of stroke and the most important controllable risk factor for stroke. Please see the

handout “Blood Pressure Management After Ischemic Stroke or Transient Ischemic Attack” for detailed instructions on how to monitor your blood pressure at home. Work with your primary care doctor to reach your goal blood pressure.

2. Control your diabetes

If you have diabetes, your chance of having a stroke is 1.5 times higher than a person who does not have diabetes. You can lower your risk of stroke by taking the following steps to manage your diabetes:

- Work with your doctor to understand your blood sugar goals.
- Measure and record your blood sugars as instructed by your doctor.
- Take your diabetes medications as instructed by your doctor.

3. Stop smoking

Tobacco use damages your blood vessels. This can lead to blockages within those vessels which can cause a stroke. Follow these tips to help you stop smoking:

- Create a plan with your doctor to quit smoking.
- Contact **MHealthy Tobacco Consultation Services** to learn about group and individual quit-smoking programs.
 - Call: (734) 998-6222
 - Visit: <http://www.mhealthy.umich.edu/tobacco>

4. Improve your diet

- Follow a **Mediterranean-type diet** which emphasizes vegetables, fruits, whole grains, low-fat dairy products, poultry, fish (1-4 servings a week), legumes, olive oil, and nuts. This diet limits the amount of sweets and red meats you eat.
- Contact Michigan Medicine’s **Nutrition Services Program** for individual counseling as well as interactive group workshops

- Call: (877) 885-8444
- Visit: <http://www.uofmhealth.org/conditions-treatments/heart-nutrition>

5. Exercise regularly

- Create a good exercise routine. This will vary from patient to patient after stroke.
- Talk with your doctor and rehabilitation team to determine the best activity for you.

6. Limit alcohol

- Talk to your doctor if you need help reducing your alcohol intake.
- Contact **MHealthy Alcohol Management Program**:
 - Call: (734) 998-2017
 - Visit: <http://mhealthy.umich.edu/alcohol>

7. Avoid using recreational drugs

Intravenous (injection) drug use and cocaine use have been linked to an increased risk for stroke. Stop using these substances to reduce your risk of stroke. Talk to your doctor if you need help quitting.

8. Take your medications as prescribed by your doctors.

Medications and stroke prevention

After your stroke, your doctor may prescribe medications to prevent another stroke or TIA. It is important that you and your family understand each of these medications.

Medication Classification	How do they work?
Anticoagulants (blood thinners) Coumadin (Warfarin) Apixaban (Eliquis) Rivaroxaban (Xarelto) Dabigatran (Pradaxa) Enoxaparin (Lovenox)	Help prevent blood clots from forming, especially for those who have atrial fibrillation (an irregular and often rapid heartbeat)
Antiplatelet Medicines Aspirin Clopidogrel (Plavix) Ticagrelor (Brilinta)	Help stop platelets from sticking together and help prevent blood clots
Statins (cholesterol lowering medicines) Atorvastatin (Lipitor) Rosuvastatin (Crestor) Simvastatin (Zocor) Pravastatin (Pravachol) Lovastatin (Altoprev) Fluvastatin (Lescol)	Help lower the amount of cholesterol in your blood. They also help reduce inflammation in your blood vessels

For additional information on preventing stroke, please visit <https://careguides.med.umich.edu/browse-by-medical-service/stroke> or ask your healthcare team for one of the below dedicated handouts:

- Physical Activity for Stroke Survivors

- BORG RPE Scale
- Heart Healthy Eating
- Controlling Your Risk Factors for Ischemic Stroke

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