

Treatments for Recurrent Stroke



The following treatments are used to help stroke survivors lower their risk for recurrent stroke. Ask your doctor which treatments are right for you. Then take the recommended steps to reduce your risk.

Medications

Antiplatelet agents

Antiplatelet agents, such as aspirin, are drugs that play a role in keeping platelets in your blood from sticking together and forming clots. They help keep blood flowing and reduce your risk of a stroke or heart attack. Antiplatelet medications should not be taken with anticoagulants unless prescribed by your physician.

Anticoagulants

Anticoagulant medicines, such as warfarin and heparin, prevent blood from clotting. They also prevent existing clots from getting larger. Clots can block blood flow and cause a heart attack or stroke. Doctors often prescribe these drugs for their patients with atrial fibrillation or deep vein thrombosis. Patients with atrial fibrillation, for example, can form blood clots in the heart.

The clots could travel to the brain and cause a stroke. Anticoagulants must be taken precisely as directed by your doctor.

Blood pressure medicines

Blood pressure medicine such as ACE inhibitors and angiotensin II receptor blockers (ARBs) are drugs that lower high blood pressure.

Cholesterol-lowering medicines (statins)

Statins are drugs that lower “bad” cholesterol and raise “good” cholesterol and thereby lower high blood pressure.

Diuretics

Diuretics, or “water pills,” reduce the volume of blood in the body and thereby lower high blood pressure.

If you have questions about the medications you are taking to control your risk for stroke, ask your doctor.



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Lifestyle changes

Diet

A healthy diet can help keep fatty deposits (called plaques) from building up in your arteries. A low-fat, low-cholesterol diet can help you reach and stay at your ideal weight. Try to eat less than 200 mg of cholesterol a day. Check the nutrition levels of the food products you eat to determine how much cholesterol they contain. High-fiber foods, such as oatmeal, dried beans and fruits, help lower cholesterol. You can get more information on cholesterol at www.nhlbi.nih.gov/cholesterol.



Exercise

Exercise helps raise “good” cholesterol. It also keeps your arteries flexible, which in turn helps keep blood flowing and lowers blood pressure. Once your doctor says you can, try to exercise for at least 30 minutes three to four times a week. Examples include walking, jogging and bike riding. Be sure to consult with your doctor before beginning any exercise program.

Keep moving! Move as much as you can. For instance, if you park your car far away from the store, you will get a little more walking into your day. Instead of sitting and watching TV, work in the garden or clean a closet.

Smoking cessation

If you smoke, STOP! Smoking causes arteries to narrow and makes the blood more likely to clot. Both of these are risk factors for stroke. Smoking also increases blood pressure—another major risk factor for stroke.

If you don't stop smoking, you are five times more likely to have another stroke, a heart attack or die. When you quit, your risk goes down quickly!

Need help to quit smoking?

- Ask your doctor about nicotine replacement therapy.
- Join a stop-smoking program in your community, such as the one offered by CHI Franciscan Health. For more information go to chifranciscan.org or call 1 (888) 825-3227.
- Your family can help you by making sure that any members of your family who smoke also quit.

