



Prevention of Stroke

patienteducation@aub.edu.lb

www.aubmc.org



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY of BEIRUT MEDICAL CENTER
المراكز الطبية في الجامعة الأمريكية في بيروت

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What is a stroke?

A stroke, also called a “brain attack”, is one of the most common conditions and leading causes of death in Lebanon and around the world. A stroke happens either because a blood supply to the brain is blocked or if one or more blood vessel in the brain ruptures. In the case of a stroke, oxygen and nutrients that are needed by all the cells of your body to function properly do not reach your brain cells causing their death. You can protect your brain and prevent yourself from having a stroke.

What are the symptoms of a stroke?

The symptoms of a stroke depend on which part of your brain is injured and how severely that part is affected. The most common symptoms include:

- Weakness or paralysis of the face, leg or arm especially on one side
- Numbness on one side of the body
- Difficulty speaking
- Trouble understanding other people
- Difficulty seeing with one or both eyes
- Double vision
- Difficulty walking
- Severe headache with unknown cause
- Dizziness
- Loss of balance or coordination
- Fainting or loss of consciousness

The symptoms are sudden.

What are the risk factors for stroke?

Several factors increase your risk of having a stroke more than others.

These include:

- Age (above 55)
- High blood pressure (hypertension)
- Smoking
- High blood sugar (diabetes)
- High cholesterol
- Heart disease
- Sleep apnea
- Irregular heartbeats (atrial fibrillation)
- Certain blood disorders (such as sickle cell disease)
- Overweight and obesity
- Lack of physical activity
- Unhealthy diet

How can I prevent having a stroke?

To prevent having a stroke, always keep your head in mind.

H: Maintain **HEALTHY weight, blood pressure, blood sugar, and blood fat levels.**

- Check with your doctor or dietitian for your ideal body weight and waist circumference. Your goal is to reach and maintain your levels.
- Control your blood pressure, blood sugar, and blood fat levels by checking your numbers frequently. Ask your doctor about your normal levels and try to reach and maintain them.

E: EAT a healthy diet.

- Choose a diet rich in vegetables and fruits. Eat at least five servings of vegetables and fruits per day.
- Eat high fiber food such as beans, lentils, peas, etc.
- Eat at least two servings of fish per week.
- Choose lean meat and chicken (without skin).
- Include low-fat or fat-free dairy products in your diet.

- Limit salt (sodium) intake to less than one teaspoon per day. Remember that certain foods that you consume daily such as processed ones are high in salt.
- Avoid fatty foods. In particular, avoid saturated fats, trans-fats, and foods labeled with partially-hydrogenated or hydrogenated fats. In general, limit butter, high fat dairy products, fried food, processed meat such as burgers and sausages, liver meats, chicken skin, egg yolks, chocolate, etc.
- If you drink alcohol, limit your alcohol intake to two drinks per day for men and one drink per day for women.

* In case of a medical condition, follow up with your doctor and dietitian to follow an appropriate diet.

A: Stay physically ACTIVE.

- Practice moderate aerobic exercise at least 30 minutes per day, five days a week. Moderate exercise includes brisk or fast walking, jogging, swimming, gardening, biking, etc. In case of a medical condition, you should follow up with your doctor before you exercise.

D: DO NOT SMOKE

- To protect your heart and brain, avoid smoking. If you smoke, quit. Avoid secondhand smoking as well. Your risk of a stroke will decrease once you quit smoking. Tobacco is a major ingredient in cigarettes, cigars, pipes, and Hubble bubbles (nargileh).

What should I do if I am suspecting a stroke?

If you think you are having a stroke act FAST:

F: Look in the mirror and check if your smile is uneven.

A: Try to raise your arms.

S: Check if your words are slurred or if you are unable to repeat a phrase.

T: Time is critical. Go to the nearest emergency room immediately.

This educational material provides general information only.

It does not constitute medical advice. Consult your health care provider to determine whether the information applies to you.

Notes

