

# High blood pressure and stroke



## What is a stroke?

A stroke occurs when the supply of blood to the brain is suddenly disrupted by a clot, plaque or because an artery bursts. When blood stops flowing, the brain does not receive oxygen it needs and therefore brain cells in the area die and permanent damage may be done. The good news is stroke is largely preventable and treatable.

## What is blood pressure?

Blood pressure is the measurement of the force put on blood vessel walls as blood travels through your body. Blood pressure varies throughout the day to meet your body's needs. High blood pressure (or hypertension) is an important risk factor for stroke and the most modifiable. High blood pressure is sometimes called the 'silent killer' as there can often be no warning signs.

## What causes high blood pressure?

There are a number of risk factors that have been linked to high blood pressure. These include:

- › A family history of high blood pressure.
- › Age (blood pressure can rise as people get older).

- › Men are more likely to have high blood pressure than women.
- › Being overweight
- › Lack of exercise.
- › Excessive alcohol drinking.
- › Smoking.
- › Diabetes.
- › A diet high in salt.

## Why does blood pressure matter?

High blood pressure can have many harmful effects which can eventually lead to stroke.

- › High blood pressure puts extra stress on blood vessel walls, causing blood vessels to thicken and break down.
- › High blood pressure can increase pressure on the walls of blood vessels taking blood to the brain and weaken them, leading to a bleed in the brain.
- › High blood pressure can cause blood clots or plaque (cholesterol and other fatty-like substances) to break off artery walls and block a brain artery causing a stroke.

## Know your numbers\*

## Recommended action



### High risk

BP 160/100 or higher and/or  
AUSDRISK 12 or more

### IMMEDIATE ATTENTION - DO NOT IGNORE

See your doctor for a full assessment (which may include a diabetes blood test to check your blood glucose levels). Please take this brochure to your doctor.



### Moderate risk

BP 140/90 – 160/100 and/or  
AUSDRISK 6-11

### FURTHER ATTENTION REQUIRED

Your results are higher than normal and you should discuss these with your doctor at your next appointment.



### Low risk

BP 140/90 or lower (130/80 or lower  
for people with diabetes) and/or  
AUSDRISK 5 or less

### MONITOR YOUR RISK FACTORS

If you have identified other risk factors above talk to your doctor about what you can do to stay healthy.

*\*This is a risk assessment only. Please consult your doctor for a full assessment. If you have identified other factors above, you are at increased risk of stroke, heart disease and type 2 diabetes.*

## High blood pressure is treatable

It is important to see your doctor immediately if your blood pressure is greater than 160/100.

If you have high blood pressure or multiple risk factors for heart disease or stroke, your doctor may prescribe medication to lower your blood pressure.

Your doctor may recommend medication, lifestyle changes or a mix of both to lower your blood pressure. Medication does not cure high blood pressure, it can only help control it. Most people who are treated for high blood pressure will need to keep taking medication over a lifetime.

## Stroke symptoms

FAST is an easy way to remember and recognise the signs of stroke.

Recognise

**STROKE**

Think **F.A.S.T.**





**F**  
Has their  
**FACE**  
drooped?

**A**  
Can they lift both  
**ARMS?**

**S**  
Is their  
**SPEECH**  
slurred and do they  
understand you?







**T**  
Call 000.  
**TIME**  
is critical

If you see any of these symptoms

**Act FAST call 000**

The Stroke Foundation is a national charity that partners with the community to prevent, treat and beat stroke. We stand alongside stroke survivors and their families, healthcare professionals and researchers. We build community awareness and foster new thinking. We support survivors on their journey to live the best possible life after stroke.

## How to get more involved

-  **Give time** – become a volunteer.
-  **Raise funds** – donate or hold a fundraising event.
-  **Speak up** – join our advocacy team.
-  **Leave a lasting legacy** – include a gift in your Will.
-  **Know your numbers** – check your health regularly.
-  **Stay informed** – keep up-to-date and share our message.

# 4.1 million Australians live with HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE




## Things you can do to lower your risk

There are a number of factors you can control to help reduce your blood pressure and chances of having a stroke.

- › **Know your blood pressure.** The lower your blood pressure the lower your risk of stroke. To lower your blood pressure your doctor may prescribe medication.
- › **Healthy eating.** Enjoy a variety of foods especially plant based foods including fresh fruit and vegetables, legumes and wholegrain breads and cereals.
- › **Get active.** Try to exercise regularly. At least 30 minutes of moderate exercise on most days of the week is recommended.
- › **Drop the salt.** Cut down on takeaway foods and don't add salt at the table or when cooking.
- › **Limit alcohol.** Stay within recommended limits for drinking alcohol (no more than two standard drinks per day).
- › **Be smoke-free.** Quit smoking. Call Quitline on 13 7848.



## Contact us

-  **StrokeLine 1800 787 653**
-  **[strokefoundation.org.au](http://strokefoundation.org.au)**
-  **[/strokefoundation](https://www.facebook.com/strokefoundation)**
-  **[@strokefdn](https://twitter.com/strokefdn)**
-  **[@strokefdn](https://www.instagram.com/strokefdn)**