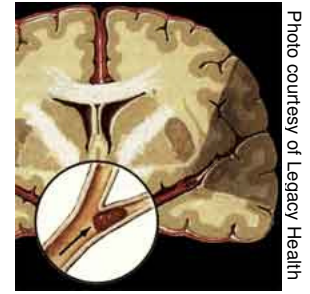


# Strokes – What You Need to Know



## Pre-reading

Questions: What do you know about strokes? What would you like to know?

Definitions: Vessel – a long, narrow tube that carries fluids through the body

Frequent – happening often

## Reading

700,000 Americans suffer a stroke every year. It is one of the leading causes of disability in America. More than 160,000 people in the United States die of strokes each year. It is the nation's third leading killer.

Strokes occur in all age groups, in both sexes, and in all races in every country. They can even occur before birth, when the fetus is still in the womb. In African Americans, strokes are more common and more deadly – even in young and middle-aged adults – than for any ethnic or other racial group in the United States. African American adults are 50% more likely than their White adult counterparts to have a stroke.

A stroke occurs when the blood supply to part of the brain is suddenly interrupted or when a blood vessel in the brain bursts, spilling blood into the spaces surrounding brain cells. Brain cells die when they no longer receive oxygen and nutrients from the blood or there is sudden bleeding into or around the brain.

There are two kinds of stroke. The most **common** kind of stroke is caused by a blood clot that blocks or plugs a blood vessel in the brain. The other kind of stroke is caused by a blood vessel that breaks and bleeds into the brain.

What are the risk factors? A risk factor is a condition or behavior that occurs more frequently in those who have, or are at greater risk of getting, a disease than in those who don't. Having a risk factor for stroke, doesn't mean you'll have a stroke. On the other hand, not having a risk factor doesn't mean you'll avoid a stroke. Your risk of stroke does grow as the number and severity of risk factors increases.

Stroke prevention is the best medicine. Some of the most treatable conditions linked to strokes are:

- High Blood Pressure – Treat it. Eat a balanced diet, maintain a healthy weight, and exercise to reduce blood pressure.
- Cigarette Smoking – Quit. Ask your doctor for help.
- Heart Disease – Manage it. Your doctor can treat your heart disease and may prescribe medication to help prevent blood clots.
- Diabetes – Control it. Treatment can delay complications that increase the risk of stroke.
- Physical Inactivity – Just move. Activities such as brisk walking, riding a bicycle, swimming, and yard work lower the risk of both stroke and heart disease.
- High Cholesterol – Have power over it. High cholesterol in the blood is a major risk factor for heart disease and raises your risk of stroke.
- Illegal drugs – Don't use them. Intravenous drug abuse carries a high risk of stroke. Cocaine use has been linked to strokes and heart attacks. Some have been fatal even in first-time users.

Contact your doctor right way, if you experience any of these stroke symptoms: sudden numbness or weakness, especially on one side of the body; sudden confusion or trouble speaking; sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes; sudden trouble walking, loss of balance, or dizziness; or sudden severe headache with no known cause.

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services – The Office of Minority Health

**Level 6.5**

## Understanding

1. What does the word **common** mean? \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. How does stroke affect the workforce in the U.S.? \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_
3. What does the sentence “Stroke prevention is the best medicine” mean? \_\_\_\_\_  
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4. Which ethnic or racial group should be extra aware of strokes? Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
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5. How many types of strokes are there? Which is the most common? \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_
6. List three risk factors for stroke. \_\_\_\_\_  
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7. Think of yourself and your lifestyle. What could you do to reduce your chance of having a stroke? \_\_\_\_\_  
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## Writing

Option A: Summarize the reading in your own words.

Option B: Write about someone you know who has had a stroke. How has it affected his/her life?

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