

Carotid Artery Procedures: Stroke Prevention

This video is meant for you if you've had a stroke or TIA.

Or it could be that after a routine test or other examination, your doctor found out that one of your carotid arteries is narrowing.

Now, it can be stressful to think there's a problem with the blood supply to your brain.

It can help to understand what all of this means so that you and your doctor can decide what's next in your treatment plan.

But let's start with a little bit about what's happening in your body.

You have two carotid arteries.

You can feel them on each side of your neck next to your windpipe on your throat.

The carotid arteries travel up each side of the neck and branch into smaller vessels that supply blood to the brain.

We all have stuff—like cholesterol and fats— that builds up in our arteries over time.

This "stuff" is called plaque.

If plaque builds up in either carotid artery, it can limit blood flow to the brain and increase your risk of a stroke.

So what should you do?

Well, that's a decision best made with your doctor.

And this video can help you discuss your choices with your doctor.

Taking medicines and having a healthy lifestyle are important for anyone who has narrowing in a carotid artery.

If you're already doing this, that's great.

You're doing a lot to prevent a stroke.

Taking medicines as your doctor prescribed can help lower your risk of stroke by lowering your blood pressure, cholesterol, and risk of a blood clot.

Here are other things you can do to stay healthy: Don't smoke.

Limit or avoid alcohol.

Be active.

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Eat heart-healthy.

Stay at a healthy weight.

And manage other health conditions, such as diabetes.

But what about procedures?

Your doctor may talk to you about a carotid endarterectomy and carotid artery stenting.

An endarterectomy removes the plaque from the carotid arteries.

And stenting involves placing a small, expandable tube called a stent in the narrowed artery to improve blood flow.

It's important to know that these procedures don't stop the plaque from building back up in your arteries.

And these procedures are not right for everyone.

So no matter what, you'll need to continue a healthy lifestyle and take medicines to help lower your stroke risk.

When considering what to do next, you and your doctor may talk about things like how much narrowing is in your carotid artery and your overall health.

Thinking about things like that can be stressful.

But you can do it.

And remember, how you feel about the risks and benefits of having a procedure is just as important as the medical facts.

And if you're already taking medicine and have a healthy lifestyle, that's great.

You're headed in a healthy direction.

Now that you know a little bit more about your options, you and your doctor can decide together what will offer more benefits than risks in your plan to care for yourself from now on.