

Stroke: What's Your Risk?

A risk factor is anything that makes you more likely to have a particular health problem, such as a stroke.

Everyone's risk for stroke is different because we all have different risk factors.

Some risk factors for stroke can be lowered with treatment and a healthy lifestyle.

Other factors can't.

The key is to understand what increases your risk and what you can do to help lower it.

Now, lots of people have some risk factors they can't change, like being older, having had a stroke before, or having a family history of stroke.

Other risk factors that you can't change include being past menopause or having had certain problems during pregnancy, such as preeclampsia.

But there are lots of risk factors you can change with treatment.

This includes having other health conditions, such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol.

Other risk factors that you can change include smoking; drinking too much alcohol; being overweight; and not eating healthy foods.

Now, it's true that all these risk factors raise the chances of having a stroke.

But the opposite is also true: Stroke risk goes down when a person quits smoking; drinks only moderate amounts of alcohol or doesn't drink at all; gets regular exercise; eats heart-healthy foods; and loses weight if they need to.

Stroke risk also goes down when other health conditions are managed.

All of this may sound like a lot to think about and do.

Knowing your risk factors, the ones you can control and the ones you can't, can help give you direction on what you can do to help lower your risk of a stroke.

If you need help knowing your next steps, you can always talk to your doctor.

Together, you can make a plan to help you live as healthy as you can.