

# Bathroom Briefs

Your line to good health!

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## Stroke Awareness

Stroke is a leading cause of death in the United States. Over 800,000 people die in the U.S. each year from cardiovascular disease and strokes.

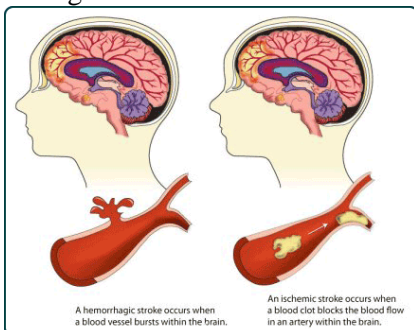
A stroke, sometimes called a brain attack, occurs when a clot blocks the blood supply to the brain or when a blood vessel in the brain bursts. You can greatly reduce your risk for stroke through lifestyle changes and, in some cases, medication.

Stroke can cause death or significant disability, such as paralysis, speech difficulties, and emotional problems. Some new treatments can reduce stroke damage if patients get medical care soon after symptoms begin. When a stroke happens, it is important to recognize the symptoms, call 9-1-1 right away, and get to a hospital quickly.

### Types of Stroke

**Ischemic Stroke.** About 85% of all strokes are ischemic, in which blood flow to the brain is blocked by blood clots or fatty deposits called plaque in blood vessel linings.<sup>1</sup>

**Hemorrhagic Stroke.** A hemorrhagic stroke occurs when a blood vessel bursts in the brain. Blood accumulates and compresses the surrounding brain tissue. There are two types of hemorrhagic stroke



**Intracerebral hemorrhage** is the most common type of hemorrhagic stroke. It occurs when an artery in the brain bursts, flooding the surrounding tissue with blood.

**Subarachnoid hemorrhage** is bleeding in the area between the brain and the thin tissues that cover it.

Transient ischemic attack (TIA) is a "warning stroke" or a "mini-stroke" that results in no lasting damage. Recognizing and treating TIAs immediately can reduce your risk of a major stroke.

### Risk Factors

Anyone can have a stroke, but certain behaviors and medical conditions can increase your chances. Fortunately, anyone can take steps to lower their risk.

**High blood pressure.** High blood pressure, also called hypertension, can greatly increase your risk for stroke. Smoking cigarettes, eating a diet high in salt, and drinking too much alcohol can all raise your blood pressure.

**High blood cholesterol.** High blood cholesterol can build up fatty deposits (plaque) on blood vessel walls. The deposits can block blood flow to the brain, causing a stroke. Diet, exercise, and family history affect blood cholesterol levels.

**Heart disease.** Common heart disorders can increase your risk for stroke. For example, coronary artery disease (CAD) increases your risk because a fatty substance called plaque blocks the arteries that bring blood to the heart. Other heart conditions, such as heart valve defects, irregular heartbeat (including atrial fibrillation), and enlarged heart chambers, can cause blood clots that may break loose and cause a stroke.

**Diabetes.** Having diabetes can increase your risk of stroke and can make the outcome of strokes worse. Diabetes is a condition that causes blood to build up too much sugar instead of delivering it to body tissues. High blood sugar tends to occur with high blood pressure and high cholesterol.

**Overweight and obesity.** Being overweight or obese can raise total cholesterol levels, increase blood pressure, and promote the development of diabetes.

**Previous stroke or transient ischemic attack (TIA).** If you have already had a stroke or a TIA, also known as a "mini-stroke," there is a greater chance that you could have a stroke in the future.

**Sickle cell disease.** This is a blood disorder that is associated with ischemic stroke, and mainly affects African-American and Hispanic children. A stroke can happen if sickle cells get stuck in a blood vessel and clog blood flow to the brain. About 10% of children with sickle cell disease will have a stroke.

### How to Prevent Stroke

**Eat a healthy diet.** Choosing healthful meal and snack options can help you avoid stroke and its complications. Be sure to eat 5-9 servings of fresh fruits and vegetables per day. Eating foods low in saturated fat and cholesterol and high in fiber can help prevent high blood cholesterol. Limiting salt or sodium in your diet can also lower your blood pressure.

**Maintain a healthy weight.** Being overweight or obese can increase your risk for stroke. To determine whether your weight is in a healthy range, doctors often calculate a number called the body mass index (BMI). Doctors sometimes also use waist and hip measurements to measure a person's excess body fat.

**Be active.** Physical activity can help you maintain a healthy weight and lower cholesterol and blood pressure. The Surgeon General recommends that adults should engage in moderate-intensity exercise for at least 30 minutes on most days of the week.

**Don't smoke.** Cigarette smoking greatly increases your risk for stroke. So, if you don't smoke, don't start. If you do smoke, quitting will lower your risk. Your doctor can suggest ways to help you quit.

**Limit alcohol use.** Avoid drinking too much alcohol, which causes high blood pressure.

*For more information, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention @ [www.cdc.gov/stroke](http://www.cdc.gov/stroke)*