

Increased prevalence of stroke hospitalizations seen in teens and young adults

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Ischemic stroke hospitalization rates in adolescents and young adults aged 15 to 44 increased up to 37% between 1995 and 2008 according to a study conducted by researchers at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The findings available today in *Annals of Neurology*, a journal of the American Neurological Association and the Child Neurology Society, report an increase in the prevalence of hypertension, diabetes, obesity, lipid disorders, and tobacco use among this age group during the 14-year study period.

The [American Heart Association](#) states that stroke is the third leading cause of death in the U.S. and 87% of all cases are attributed to ischemic stroke, in which blood flow to the brain is blocked by blood clots or build-up of fatty deposits called plaque (atherosclerosis) inside blood vessels. Prior studies report stroke in adolescents and young adults accounts for 5% to 10% of all stroke incidences, and is one of the top 10 causes of [childhood death](#).

CDC researchers used hospital discharge data from the Nationwide Inpatient Sample of the Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project to identify patients hospitalized for ischemic stroke. [Stroke risk factors](#) and comorbidities among those hospitalized with stroke were also analyzed. "We identified significant increasing trends in ischemic stroke hospitalizations among adolescents and young adults," said Mary George, M.D., M.S.P.H., lead author of the study and a medical officer with

CDC's Division for Heart Disease and [Stroke Prevention](#). "Our results from national surveillance data accentuate the need for public health initiatives to reduce the prevalence of risk factors for stroke among adolescents and young adults."

Of the patients hospitalized for [ischemic stroke](#), the study found that nearly one in three patients aged 15 to 34 years and over half aged 35 to 44 years were also diagnosed with hypertension. One-fourth of patients aged 35 to 44 years also had diabetes. One in four females aged 15 to 34, one in three females aged 35 to 44, and one in three males aged 15 to 44 were tobacco users. Other common co-existing conditions included obesity and lipid disorders.

The authors advised that adolescents, their guardians, and young adults can help avoid stroke by preventing and controlling hypertension, diabetes, and cholesterol; eating plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables and foods low in sodium and saturated fat; maintaining a healthy weight; engaging in regular physical activity; and not smoking.

CDC is working with public- and private-sector partners at the national, state, and local levels to educate Americans about the risk factors, health effects, and prevention measures of stroke. The agency is also enhancing the monitoring of stroke causes, associated conditions, and hospitalizations, as well as expanding the scientific literature on these topics.

More information: "Trends in Stroke Hospitalizations and Risk Factors in Children and Young Adults: 1995-2008"; Mary G. George, Xin Tong, Elena V. Kuklina, Darwin R. Labarthe. *Annals of Neurology*; Published Online: September 1, 2011 ([DOI:10.1002/ana.22539](https://doi.org/10.1002/ana.22539)).

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