

Prevent stroke and disability with healthy lifestyle

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Micrograph showing cortical pseudolaminar necrosis, a finding seen in strokes on medical imaging and at autopsy. H&E-LFB stain. Credit: Nephron/Wikipedia

Stroke is the top cause of disability but half of strokes could be prevented.

Women are more at [risk](#) of stroke and are the focus of this year's campaign. More [women](#) die from stroke than men - 60% of stroke

deaths are in women. They are also less likely to receive acute care and rehabilitation than men, even though they respond equally well to treatment.

"Women have more risk factors for stroke than men," said European Society of Cardiology (ESC) spokesperson Professor A. John Camm, professor of clinical cardiology in the Cardiovascular and Cell Sciences Research Institute at St George's University of London, UK.

"Women who have atrial fibrillation (irregular heartbeat), are more likely than [men](#) to have high blood pressure, diabetes, depression and obesity, which all increase the risk of stroke," said Professor Camm. "Risk is also increased with birth control pills, hormone replacement therapy, hormonal changes at menopause, pregnancy associated diabetes and preeclampsia."

Stroke occurs when the blood supply to part of the brain is cut off. Brain cells can be damaged or killed, leading to effects on mobility, speech, thinking and feeling.

Stroke can be prevented with a healthy lifestyle, which means:

- Stop smoking
- Be physically active
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Eat healthily
- Keep alcohol within recommended levels
- Reduce stress.

These measures also lower the risk of heart disease.

Women should have a regular cardiovascular health check in the same way they are screened for cervical cancer and breast cancer,

recommended Professor Camm. "A risk assessment will help you know where to take action," he said. "Your doctor may prescribe medication to diminish your stroke risk if you are found to have high blood pressure or atrial fibrillation."

Death and disability from stroke can be avoided if treatment is given quickly. If you suspect someone has had a [stroke](#), do the FAST check:

- F - Face: is one side drooping?
- A - Arms: raise both arms, is one side weak?
- S - Speech: Is the person able to speak? Are words jumbled or slurred?
- T - Time: act quickly and seek emergency medical attention immediately.

"Stroke is a devastating disease but we know that around 50% of strokes could be prevented," said Professor Camm. "I strongly advise adopting a healthier lifestyle and visiting your doctor to find out which risk factors you have that need attention."

Provided by European Society of Cardiology

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