



let's talk about

## **LGBTQ+ People and Stroke**

LGBTQ+ individuals have higher rates of stroke compared to their heterosexual peers. Barriers to care can lead to risk factors such as high blood pressure, smoking and obesity to be undiagnosed or poorly managed.

Social stigma and discrimination against LGBTQ+ people put them at higher risk for mental health disorders and chronic stress, which can lead to long-lasting damage to the body and brain. LGBTQ+ people are also more likely to face discrimination in health care settings, leading to delayed care and unmanaged health issues. Bias, stereotyping and a lack of culturally sensitive providers are barriers to quality care.

Stroke is a brain attack that most often occurs when blood that brings oxygen to your brain stops flowing and brain cells die.



### **Stroke risk factors in LGBTQ+ People include:**

- **Stress** — Discrimination and stigma increase stress and mental health disorders in LGBTQ+ populations, which can increase risk for stroke. This may include discrimination at the familial, social, cultural and employer levels.
- **High blood pressure** — LGBTQ+ individuals may delay medical care due to fear of discrimination, leading to unmanaged high blood pressure.
- **HIV/AIDS** — Those living with HIV/AIDS are 2.7 times more likely to have a stroke.
- **Not exercising regularly** — LGBTQ+ individuals report higher rates of physical inactivity due to stigma or fear of violence.
- **Smoking** — LGBTQ+ adults, particularly women, are more likely to smoke.
- **Hormone therapy** — Estrogen and testosterone therapy may increase risk for cardiovascular disease, high cholesterol, high blood pressure and stroke.
- **Obesity** — Lesbian and bisexual women are almost 50% more likely than straight women to be obese.

### **How can I control my risk?**

- Some stroke risk factors can't be controlled — such as age, gender, social conditions, family medical history and previous strokes. But up to 80% of strokes may be prevented by making lifestyle changes and managing your medical conditions.
- Take these steps to reduce your risk for stroke:
  - Know your numbers.
  - Eat more fruit and vegetables.
  - Reduce salt in your diet.
  - Increase physical activity.
  - Quit smoking.
  - Lose excess body weight.
  - Manage stress.
  - Take any recommended medications.
- Talk with your health care team about your risk factors so you can understand how to manage them.

*(continued)*



## Stroke warning signs

- Stroke is an emergency! Call 911 immediately if you see one or more signs of a stroke. Note the time when any symptoms first appear. Quick treatment can make the difference between life and death.
- Signs and symptoms of stroke can differ depending on what part of your brain is impacted. Use the letters in F.A.S.T. to recognize several common stroke symptoms and remember what to do.

## SPOT A STROKE™ **F.A.S.T.**



**FACE**  
Drooping



**ARM**  
Weakness



**SPEECH**  
Difficulty



**TIME**  
to Call 911



## HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1** Call 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653) or visit [stroke.org](https://stroke.org) to learn more about stroke or find local support groups.
- 2** Sign up for our monthly *Stroke Connection e-news* for stroke survivors and caregivers at [StrokeConnection.org](https://StrokeConnection.org).
- 3** Connect with others who have also had an experience with stroke by joining our Support Network at [stroke.org/SupportNetwork](https://stroke.org/SupportNetwork).

## Do you have questions for your doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write down your questions for the next time you see your health care professional.

For example:

**What is my risk for stroke?**

**How can I better manage my stress?**

**What are the most important things I can do to reduce my stroke risk?**

## MY QUESTIONS:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices, manage your condition or care for a loved one. Visit [stroke.org/LetsTalkAboutStroke](https://stroke.org/LetsTalkAboutStroke) to learn more.