

## Wellness Articles

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If you would like to be added to the distribution list for these articles, please email: [Rebecca.johnson2@albertahealthservices.ca](mailto:Rebecca.johnson2@albertahealthservices.ca). You will receive a monthly email containing articles for the upcoming four weeks.

An archive of past wellness articles is available at [Wellness Articles | Alberta Health Services](#)

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## Prevent the risk of strokes

June is Stroke Awareness Month in Canada.

Risk factors such as high blood pressure, diabetes, smoking, high cholesterol, physical inactivity, age, family history and more put you at a higher risk of experiencing a stroke.

### What is a stroke?

A stroke occurs when a blood vessel in the brain bursts or is blocked. Without blood and the oxygen it carries, part of the brain starts to die. The part of the body controlled by the damaged area of the brain can't work properly.

Symptoms of a stroke happen quickly and brain damage can begin within minutes. Quick treatment can help limit damage to the brain and increase the chance of a full recovery.

The acronym FAST is a simple way to remember the main symptoms of stroke. FAST stands for:

- Face – Is it drooping?
- Arms – Can you raise both?
- Speech – Is it slurred or jumbled?
- Time – Call 911 immediately.

If you have any of these symptoms, even if they go away quickly, call 911 or other emergency services right away. A stroke can't be self-managed at home. To learn more [www.ahs.ca/heartandstroke](http://www.ahs.ca/heartandstroke)

### How can I identify my risk for stroke?

Knowing your personal risk can help you act to lower your risk.

You and your healthcare provider can look at things that put you at risk for a heart attack and stroke. He or she might look at many things, such as:

- Your cholesterol levels.
- Your blood pressure.
- Your age.
- Your race.
- Whether you are male or female.
- Whether or not you smoke.

Learn about [cardiovascular disease risk screening](#) or visit the [risk calculator tool](#).

### **How can you prevent a stroke?**

You can make some lifestyle changes that can reduce your risk of stroke and improve your overall health. It's important to know that if you've had a stroke you are at risk of having another one.

You can work with your healthcare provider to help identify your risk and create a plan to help manage any health conditions.

- Treat any health problems you have
  - Manage high blood pressure or high cholesterol by working with your doctor.
  - Manage diabetes. Keep your blood sugar levels within a target range.
  - If your doctor recommends taking aspirin or a blood thinner, take it.
  - Take your medicine exactly as prescribed. Call your doctor if you think you are having a problem with your medicine.
  - Get the influenza (flu) vaccine every year.
- Adopt a healthy lifestyle
  - Don't smoke or allow others to smoke around you.
  - Limit alcohol. Guidance can be found here: [Alcohol | Alberta Health Services](#)
  - Stay at a healthy weight. Being overweight makes it more likely you will develop high blood pressure, heart problems, and diabetes. These conditions make a stroke more likely.
  - Be active. Ask your doctor what type and level of activity is safe for you. If you are in a stroke rehab program, your rehab team can make an exercise program that is right for you.
  - Eat heart-healthy foods. These include fruits, vegetables, high-fibre foods, fish, and foods that are low in sodium, saturated fat, and trans fat.

For more information on strokes, please speak with your family doctor or call Health Link at 811 to speak with a Registered nurse.