

One of the most valuable ways you can contribute to the campaign is simply by becoming familiar with the facts and including them in your conversations. Here are some of the points we hope you'll commit to learning and share with others:

The Facts About Stroke and African Americans

While anyone can have a stroke, knowing about and managing risk factors reduces risk. African Americans are among those least aware of stroke risk factors, despite having a high prevalence of high blood pressure, obesity and tobacco use. In fact,

- Blacks have almost twice the risk of first-ever strokes compared to whites.
- Blacks have higher death rates for stroke compared to whites.
- The prevalence of high blood pressure in African Americans in the United States is the highest in the world.
- Among non-Hispanic blacks age 20 and older, 62.9 percent of men and 77.2 percent of women are overweight or obese.
- In 2002, 28.8 percent of black or African-Americans only, used any tobacco product. Heavy cigarette smoking approximately doubles a person's risk for stroke when compared to light smokers.
- Black women have higher prevalence rates of high blood pressure, obesity, physical inactivity, and diabetes than white women.

General Stroke Statistics

- About 700,000 Americans will have a new or recurrent stroke this year — that's someone every 45 seconds.
- Stroke is the nation's No. 3 killer and a leading cause of severe, long-term disability.
- Over 157,000 people will die from a stroke this year.
- 14 percent of people who survive a first stroke or TIA (transient ischemic attack) will have another one within one year.
- The length of time to recover from a stroke depends on severity. From 50 to 70 percent of stroke survivors regain functional independence, but 15 to 30 percent are permanently disabled. Twenty percent require institutionalized care at three months after onset.

The Recommendations

- It's important to see a healthcare provider and to have blood pressure and cholesterol levels checked on a regular basis.
- Each of us should know our blood pressure numbers and keep track of our cholesterol numbers too.
- Optimum blood pressure is less than 120/80. Prehypertension is blood pressure from 120–139/80–89. Blood pressure that's 140/90 or higher should be treated through diet and exercise or, if lifestyle changes don't work, with medication.
- Optimum total cholesterol is less than 200. If total cholesterol is 240 or higher, it's considered high risk and should be treated with diet and some type of moderate physical activity or, if lifestyle changes don't work, with medication.
- Cholesterol is divided into two types: HDL (good) and LDL (bad). It's important to keep LDL under 130. Desirable levels of HDL are 40 or higher (the higher the better — an HDL of 60 mg/dL and above is considered protective against heart disease).
- Blood sugar levels should be checked regularly to screen for high blood sugar or diabetes, especially if it runs in your family. A random glucose test (non-fasting) reading of 185 or more, or a fasting test reading of 126 or more, indicates that you may be diabetic. Prediabetes, also called impaired fasting glucose, is a fasting test reading of 100–125.
- Taking prescribed medication and following recommended dietary changes can keep diabetes under control.
- Overweight and obesity should be addressed with a sensible diet and physical activity. A weight loss of even 10 to 20 pounds can reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke.
- Those who don't smoke should never start. Those who do should quit immediately. Quitting cigarettes can lower the risk of heart disease and stroke.
- Regular physical activity is important because it helps control blood pressure, cholesterol and weight.

The Warning Signs

Warning signs of stroke include:

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden, severe headache with no known cause

Not all of these warning signs occur in every stroke. If one does, don't wait. Get help immediately. Stroke is a medical emergency — call 9-1-1.