



**Heart  
&Stroke™**

# Your guide to stroke prevention

Did you know that up to 80% of premature strokes and heart disease cases can be prevented through healthy lifestyle behaviours? By eating healthy, staying active and managing your stress, you can make a big difference in your health.

## **What's inside:**

- what is stroke?
- risk factors for stroke
- easy lifestyle changes to prevent stroke



**With the rise in stroke cases among both the aging population and younger individuals in Canada, it's more important than ever to take charge of your health.**

## What is stroke?

A stroke happens when blood stops flowing to any part of your brain. It can happen suddenly, without warning, at any time and at any age. Every minute during a stroke, 1.9 million brain cells die. The effects of a stroke vary depending on the severity and which part of your brain is affected.

Strokes need immediate medical attention. Recognizing the signs of stroke and starting treatment quickly improves recovery chances.

## Know the signs of **STROKE**

**F**

**Face**

is it drooping?

**A**

**Arms**

can you raise both?

**S**

**Speech**

is it slurred or jumbled?

**T**

**Time**

to call 9-1-1

**Beat stroke**  
**Call 9-1-1 FAST**



Knowing the FAST signs, saves lives...



**Louis-Philippe and Josée,**  
she had a stroke, but  
her partner knew the  
signs and called 9-1-1.

[Read her story](#)

# What puts you at risk for stroke?

Stroke can happen without warning, at any time and at any age, but certain risk factors can significantly increase your chances. Understanding your own risk factors is the first step towards preventing a stroke.

**Certain medical conditions increase stroke risk but can be managed with medication, treatment and healthy choices :**



**High blood pressure:**  
weakens artery walls and  
is the **#1 risk factor**  
**for stroke**



**Atrial fibrillation (Afib):**  
an irregular heart rhythm  
that can cause small clots  
to form in your heart, which  
can travel to your brain



**Blocked carotid arteries:**  
when the large arteries in  
your neck become  
narrowed, making it difficult  
for the blood to flow to  
your brain



**High cholesterol:**  
leads to a buildup of  
plaque in the artery walls  
(atherosclerosis), making it  
harder for blood to flow  
through your body



**Sleep apnea:**  
interrupted breathing  
during sleep, lowering the  
amount of oxygen  
reaching your brain



**Pre-eclampsia:**  
high blood pressure  
during pregnancy, which  
increases risk for high blood  
pressure, heart disease  
and stroke later in life



**Pregnancy:**  
30 out of 100,000 women  
will experience a stroke,  
with risk highest just before  
or just after birth

**Many of the biggest risk factors for stroke come down to your lifestyle habits, which are things you can change.**

**These can include:**

- diet
- physical activity
- stress
- smoking
- alcohol or recreational drug use



**Some risk factors are beyond your control but are important to be aware of.**

**These can include:**

- sex
- age
- family history
- medical history
- ethnicity
- personal circumstances and environmental factors like access to healthy food, safe drinking water and health care services

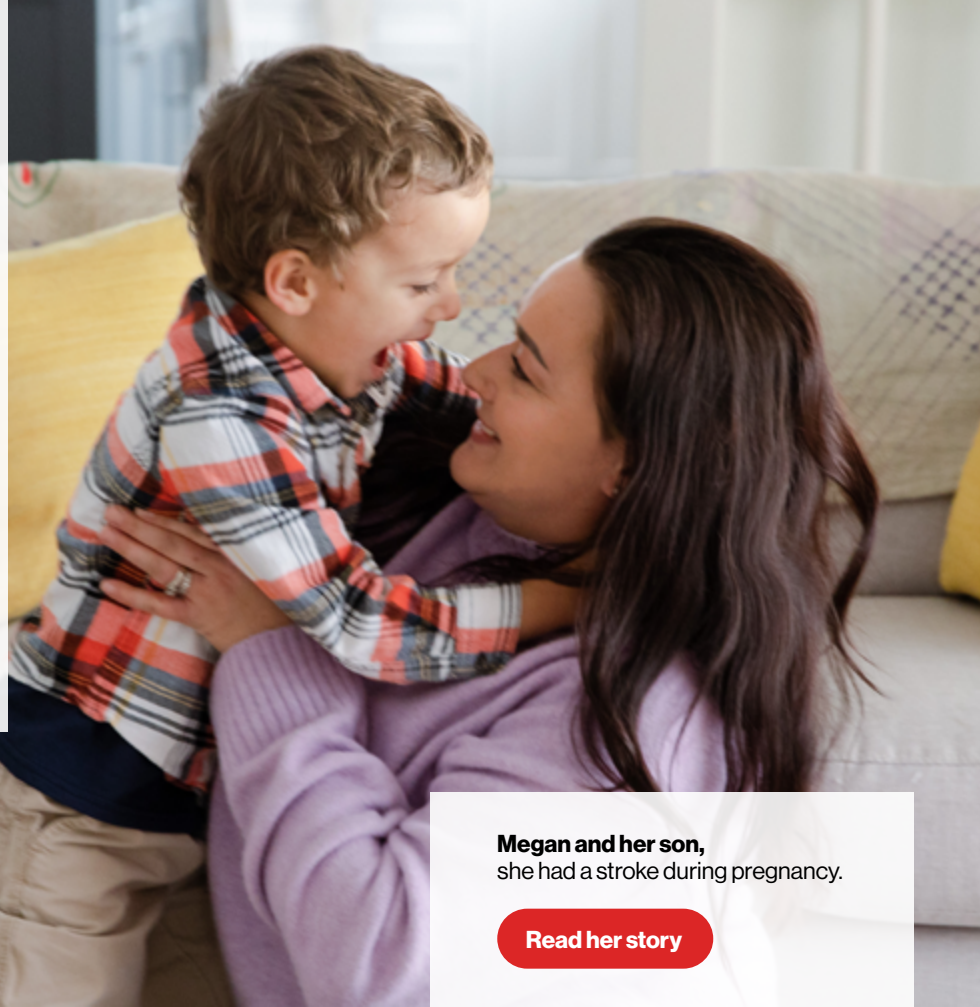


**Discussing these risk factors with your healthcare provider, nurse practitioner, pharmacist or seeking information from reliable health resources can help determine if you are at a greater risk for stroke.**

## Women's unique risk factors

**Stroke affects women more than men**, and more women die from it. Women's stroke risk changes throughout their life – during their reproductive years, menopause and as they age. Knowing these unique risks can help women take steps to protect their health at every life stage.

**Learn more about how stroke affects women and how to reduce your risk.**



**Megan and her son,** she had a stroke during pregnancy.

[Read her story](#)

## Simple ways to lower your stroke risk

**About 9 in 10 people living in Canada have at least one risk factor for stroke. The good news? Lifestyle changes can dramatically lower your risk.**

### Eat well

A healthy, balanced diet can help lower your risk of heart disease and stroke by improving cholesterol, reducing blood pressure, maintaining a healthy weight and keeping your blood sugar in check.

#### Try to eat more:

- ✓ vegetables and fruit (½ of your plate)
- ✓ whole grains like brown rice, quinoa and whole wheat bread (¼ of your plate)
- ✓ lean proteins, such as poultry, fish and plant-based options like beans and lentils (¼ of your plate)

#### Try to limit:

- ✗ highly processed foods like fast food, chips and cookies
  - ✗ sugary drinks and excessive alcohol
- If you do drink, Health Canada suggests no more than two drinks per day, but newer guidelines from the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction suggest two standard drinks or less per week.

#### Easy tips to eat healthier:

- cook more meals at home
  - plan your meals for the week
  - choose recipes packed with vegetables and fresh ingredients
  - make water your go-to drink
- Small changes make a big difference. Start where you can and build from there!

## Move more

**Staying active is one of the most important things you can do for your health** – and it doesn't need to be complicated! Find simple ways to move more every day:

- take a short walk on your lunch break or after dinner
- rake leaves or do yard work
- choose the stairs instead of the elevator

The key? Do what you enjoy. Whether it's dancing, biking or yoga, finding activities you love makes it easier to stick with them – and have fun along the way.



## Manage your stress

Stress can take a toll on your body, causing your heart to work harder and increase blood pressure, which can increase your risk of heart disease and stroke. That's why it's important to recognize what causes your stress and find ways to manage it.

**Simple strategies to help you manage your stress:**

### Stay positive:

control your response to stress and focus on maintaining a positive attitude.



### Talk it out:

figure out your emotional reactions to stress – such as anxiousness, frustration, irritability and talk about them with someone you trust.



### Breathe deep:

practice deep breathing and relaxation exercises to calm your mind and body.



### Make changes:

identify what you can control, whether that's adjusting your workload or stepping away from stressful situations.



## Don't smoke

Smoking (or tobacco use, including vaping and chewables) increases your risk of developing heart disease and stroke and it's a leading risk for disability and premature death in Canada. Becoming smoke-free is a huge step towards a healthier and longer life for yourself and those around you.



**In need of inspiration to get started on healthy eating?**

Check out these recipes for heart and brain health!

**Healthy Living Recipes**



## Salmon arugula salad with blueberry pomegranate vinaigrette

 **4 servings**

 **10 min**

### Ingredients

- ☐ **1/3 cup** (75 mL) blueberry pomegranate juice
- ☐ **2 tbsp** (30 mL) pourable sugar substitute
- ☐ **2 tsp** (10 mL) grated lemon or lime zest
- ☐ **2 tbsp** (30 mL) lemon or lime juice
- ☐ **2 tbsp** (30 mL) white balsamic vinegar
- ☐ **2 tbsp** (30 mL) canola oil
- ☐ **1/4 tsp** (1 mL) pepper flakes
- ☐ **8 cups** (2 L) arugula (about 6 oz/170 g)
- ☐ **1/2 cup** (125 mL) thinly sliced red onions (2 oz / 60 g)
- ☐ **1 cup** (250 mL) blueberries
- ☐ **4 oz** (125 g) salmon, flaked
- ☐ **2 tbsp** (30 mL) slivered almonds or pecans, toasted coarsely ground black pepper

### Directions

#### Step 1

In small jar, combine pomegranate juice, sugar substitute, lemon or lime zest, lemon or lime juice, vinegar, canola oil and pepper flakes. Secure tightly with lid and shake vigorously until well blended.

#### Step 2

Arrange equal amounts of arugula, onions and berries on each of four dinner plates. Shake jar vigorously and spoon equal amounts of salad dressing (3 tbsp/45 mL each) over each plate. Sprinkle evenly with salmon, nuts and top with black pepper. Serve immediately for peak flavours and texture.

**Tip:** Salad dressing may be made up to a week in advance, but the intensity of the pepper flakes will increase slightly.

### Nutrition info per serving (1 of 4)

- Calories 130 • Protein 3 g
- Total fat 7.5 g: Saturated fat 0.5 g • Cholesterol 15 mg
- Carbohydrates 11 g: Fibre 3 g • Sugars 6 g • Added sugar 0 g
- Sodium 40 mg • Potassium 320 mg

## Keep your blood pressure in check

**Regular blood pressure checks are important in maintaining good health.**

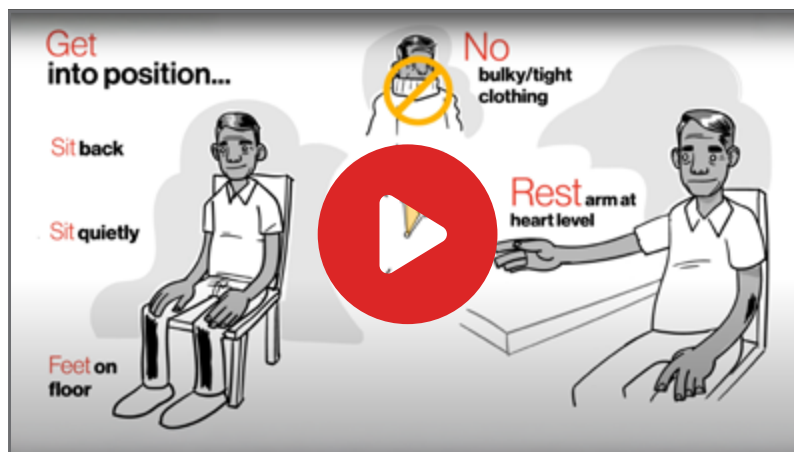
Have your blood pressure checked regularly by your healthcare provider, at a local pharmacy or at home with an upper-arm monitor if you have one. If you are prescribed medication for high blood pressure, be sure to take it as directed.

**120** ← **Systolic**  

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**80** ← **Diastolic**

**Watch this video on how to measure your blood pressure at home.**



**Taking steps to prevent stroke can make a big difference to your health. By adopting simple, healthy habits, you can enjoy a better quality of life and peace of mind.**

More helpful articles:

**Heart-healthy recipes**

**Heart-healthy eating on a budget**

**Managing your blood pressure**

