

DELAWARE HEALTHCARE

Clarifying the Connection Between Hypertension and Stroke

May is Stroke Awareness Month. It's the perfect time to educate people about the risk factors, signs, and symptoms associated with stroke, and that approximately 80% of strokes that occur are preventable. Here, Thomas Trobiano, a former nurse practitioner in the cardiology field who now serves as Executive Director of Cardiovascular and Neuroscience Services at Beebe Healthcare, explains the connection between hypertension and stroke, and provides answers that could make a lifesaving difference.



Q: Can hypertension cause a stroke?

A: Yes. Hypertension—or high blood pressure—can cause the blood vessels in your brain to constrict or narrow and can lead to the formation of blood clots or blood vessel blockages. When these blockages inhibit oxygen from reaching the brain, a stroke can occur.

Q: What is ideal in terms of a blood pressure reading?

A: Blood pressure accounts for systolic and diastolic numbers. Your

systolic blood pressure, which is the number on top, measures the pressure the heart puts on the walls of your arteries when it beats. Your diastolic blood pressure, or the number on the bottom, measures the pressure your heart puts on the walls of your arteries between beats. An ideal reading is 120/80. A reading of 130/80 tells you that you are at risk for hypertension. And a reading of 140/90 means you are at increased risk for stroke.

Q: What can I do to improve my blood pressure reading?

A: Individuals interested in controlling their blood pressure should always seek medical expertise from a healthcare clinician so they know their own personal target. Modifiable risk factors such as smoking cessation, nutrition, and increased physical activity are key in lowering your stroke risk. Exercising on a regular basis, coupled with managing stress levels and getting enough sleep, is essential. Sometimes, despite these commitments, people may need medication to control blood pressure.

Q: Will my blood pressure go down if I lose weight?

A: Yes. Losing up to 20 pounds can equate to a 5-20 millimeter of mercury (mm Hg) point drop in your systolic blood pressure. It's approximately 1 mm Hg per 2.2 pounds of weight lost. These small changes really do add up and can make a meaningful difference in your overall health and ability to reduce your risk factors for stroke.

Q: How can I check my blood pressure?

A: Your primary care provider should always welcome you for a blood pressure check. In addition, there are many community resources that make it possible for you to check and monitor your blood pressure. Many local pharmacies, drug stores, and libraries have blood pressure cuffs available for public use.

Q: What should I do if I believe I or a loved one is experiencing a stroke?

A: Recognizing the signs and symptoms of stroke is significant (**check out our BE FAST graphic below**). Every minute counts when a stroke occurs, and it is in your best interest to get to the hospital quickly. Don't ever drive someone who may be experiencing a stroke to the hospital. **Instead, call 911 immediately.**



BALANCE

Does the person have a sudden loss of balance?

EYES

Has the person lost vision in one or both eyes?

FACE

Does the person's face look uneven?

ARMS

Is one arm weak or numb?

SPEECH

Is the person's speech slurred? Does the person have trouble speaking or seemed confused?

TIME

Call 9-1-1 now!



Learn more about Beebe Healthcare's stroke program at beebehealthcare.org/services/neurology-stroke