

Hispanic Women and Stroke



You take care of everyone in your family. Now it's time to take care of yourself to lower your chance of having a stroke.

Hispanic women have some of the highest rates of diabetes and obesity, which are two risk factors for stroke. Stroke is the third leading cause of death for Hispanic women—and it affects Hispanic women at younger ages than non-Hispanic white women.

These facts sound alarming, but there is good news: Up to 80% of strokes can be prevented. This means it is important to know your risk of having a stroke and taking action to reduce that risk.

What Is a Stroke?

A stroke happens when blood flow to an area of the brain is cut off. When brain cells can't get oxygen, they die. Stroke is a medical emergency. It's important to get treatment as soon as possible. A delay in treatment increases the risk of permanent brain damage or death.

Why Are Hispanic Women at Higher Risk?

- **High blood pressure** is one of the main risk factors for a stroke. About 3 out of 10 Hispanic women have high blood pressure, and many do not know it.
- People with **diabetes** are at higher risk of stroke. About 1 out of 6 Hispanic women has diabetes—including many who don't know they have the disease. Diabetes is more common in people of Mexican, Dominican, Puerto Rican, and Central American ancestry.
- Being **overweight or obese** increases your risk of stroke. About 4 out of 5 Hispanic women are overweight or obese.
- **Smoking** doubles your stroke risk. About 1 out of 10 Hispanic women smokes.

Scientists don't know exactly why Hispanic women have a higher risk for high blood pressure, obesity, and diabetes, but they believe lifestyle and social factors may play a role.

If Stroke Happens, Act F.A.S.T.

Strokes come on suddenly and should be treated as medical emergencies. If you think you or someone else may be having a stroke, act F.A.S.T.:



F—Face:

Ask the person to smile. Does one side of the face droop?



A—Arms:

Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?



S—Speech:

Ask the person to repeat a simple phrase. Is the speech slurred or strange?



T—Time:

If you see any of these signs, call 9-1-1 right away.

Calling an ambulance is critical because emergency medical technicians, or EMTs, can take you to a hospital that can treat stroke patients, and in some cases they can begin life-saving treatment on the way to the emergency room. Some treatments for stroke work only if given within the first 3 hours after symptoms start.



How Can I Prevent Stroke?

Most strokes can be prevented by keeping medical conditions under control and making lifestyle changes. A good place to start is to know your **ABCS of heart health**:

- A Aspirin:** Aspirin may help reduce your risk of stroke. But do not take aspirin if you think you're having a stroke. It can make some types of stroke worse. Before taking aspirin, talk with your doctor about whether aspirin is right for you.
- B Blood Pressure:** Control your blood pressure.
- C Cholesterol:** Manage your cholesterol.
- S Smoking:** Quit smoking or don't start.

Make lifestyle changes:

- **Eat healthy and stay active.** Choose healthy foods most of the time, including foods with less salt, or sodium, to lower your blood pressure, and get regular physical activity. Being overweight raises your risk of stroke.
- **Go to the doctor.** It's important to find a doctor you feel comfortable with and can talk to about your health and your risk for having a stroke, including your age and whether anyone in your family has had a stroke. [Community health workers](#), or *promotores de salud*, are available in many Spanish-speaking areas to help people get the help they need.
- **Get other health conditions under control**, such as diabetes or heart disease.

What Is CDC Doing About Stroke?

CDC and its partners are leading national initiatives and programs to reduce the death and disability caused by stroke and to help women live longer, healthier lives:

- CDC's [Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention](#) (DHDSP) supports all 50 states in their efforts to prevent and control heart disease and stroke—especially programs that reduce differences in health due to a person's ethnicity, income, or where they live.
- DHDSP supports the [WISEWOMAN](#) program for low-income women who don't have health insurance or don't have enough health insurance. WISEWOMAN helps women find doctors, get screened for chronic diseases, and take part in lifestyle programs to prevent heart disease and stroke.
- The [Paul Coverdell National Acute Stroke Program](#) funds states to measure, track, and improve the quality of care for all stroke patients. The program works to reduce death and disabilities from stroke.
- The [Million Hearts](#)[®] initiative, which is led by CDC and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, aims to prevent 1 million heart attacks and strokes by 2017.

Learn more by visiting www.cdc.gov/stroke