

## Stroke Prevention

### ***Risk Factors You Cannot Change***

- Age – Risk increases as you age.
- Family History – Close family member with a history of stroke
- Medical History – If you have a history of stroke or mini stroke (TIA)
- Gender – Males, and females after menopause
- Ethnicity – African, South Asian and Indigenous heritage more likely to have high blood pressure and diabetes so at higher risk of stroke.

### ***Medical Illnesses that are Risk Factors for Stroke***

**High Blood Pressure (Hypertension):** High blood pressure is the number one risk factor for stroke. This can be treated with medications and by eating a healthy diet and being more active.

**Diabetes:** High blood sugar can damage the walls of the arteries causing an increase in blood pressure and narrowing of the arteries from plaque.

**High Cholesterol:** High cholesterol causes plaque to buildup in the arteries. This can result in a clot developing in the artery, cutting off blood flow to areas of the brain.

**Atrial Fibrillation (Afib):** Afib causes your heart rhythm to be irregular. Clots can form in the heart and travel to the brain. Medications are prescribed to prevent the clots from forming.

### ***Lifestyle Risk Factors***

**Diet:** Eat meals that are low in fat, salt (sodium) and calories. Choose foods high in fiber (vegetables, fruit and legumes) as it helps lower your cholesterol, your blood pressure, and helps you keep a healthy weight.

**Smoking and vaping:** These habits cause plaque to buildup in the arteries, lessens the oxygen in your blood and raises your risk of blood clots.

**Alcohol:** Heavy drinking or binge drinking can increase your blood pressure.

**Activity/Exercise:** Exercise and staying active at least 5 times a week or more (walking up to 30 minutes a day) will help lower your risk of heart disease and stroke.

**Over weight (obesity):** Men with a waist size of 40” or more and women with a waist size of 35” or more are at higher risk.

**Sleep Apnea:** Sleep apnea lowers the amount of oxygen reaching the brain. It can also cause an increase in your blood pressure.

**Stress/Depression:** Stress and depression are linked to high blood pressure, smoking and obesity.