



New guidelines for reducing stroke risk in women



New guidelines for preventing stroke in women have been released by the American Heart Association and American Stroke Association. The guidelines outline stroke risks unique to women and provide evidence-based recommendations.

“If you are a woman, you share many of the same risk factors for stroke with men, but your risk is also influenced by hormones, reproductive health, pregnancy, childbirth and other sex-related factors,” explained Cheryl Bushnell, MD, MHS, author of the new scientific statement published in the American Heart Association journal *Stroke*.

The guidelines are geared towards primary care providers, including OBGYNs. For example, the guidelines recommend that women with a history of high blood pressure before pregnancy should be considered for low-dose aspirin and/or calcium supplement therapy to lower preeclampsia risks.

Women who have preeclampsia have twice the risk of stroke and a four-fold risk of high blood pressure later in life. Therefore, the guidance says, preeclampsia should be recognised as a risk factor well after pregnancy, and other risk factors such as smoking, high cholesterol, and obesity in these women should be treated early.

Other recommendations included in the guideline are:

- Pregnant women with moderately high blood pressure (150-159 mmHg/100-109 mmHg) may be considered for blood pressure medication, whereas expectant mothers with severe high blood pressure (160/110 mmHg or above) should be treated.
- Women who have migraine headaches with aura should stop smoking to avoid higher stroke risks.
- Women over age 75 should be screened for atrial fibrillation risks due to its link to higher stroke risk.

High blood pressure, migraine with aura, atrial fibrillation, diabetes, depression and emotional stress are stroke risk factors that tend to be stronger or more common in women than in men. More studies are needed in order to develop a female-specific score to identify women at risk for stroke, said Bushnell, associate professor of neurology and director of the Stroke Center at Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center in Winston-Salem, NC.

Source: [American Heart Association](#)

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