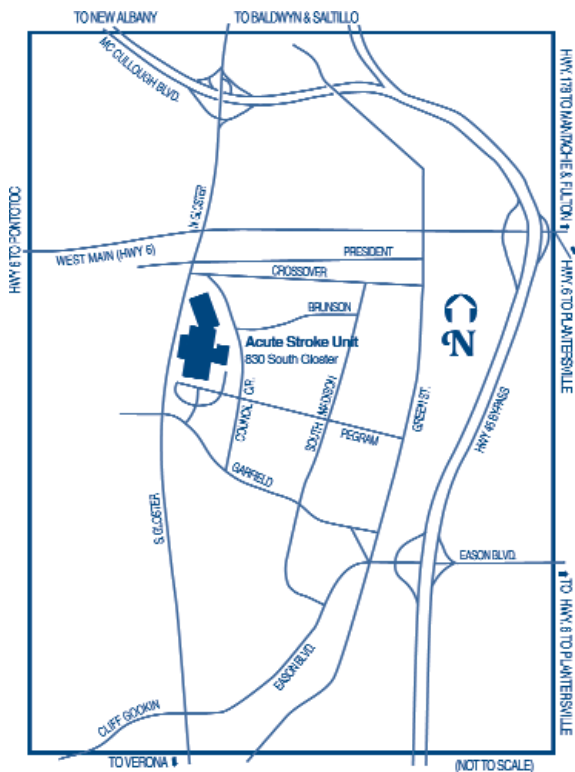


North Mississippi Medical Center
Acute Stroke Unit
830 South Gloster Street
Tupelo, MS 38801
(662) 377-3000 or
1-800-THE DESK (1-800-843-3375)
www.nmhs.net



ACUTE STROKE UNIT

Stroke: Are you at risk?

A guide to stroke risk factors &
resources at
North Mississippi Medical Center



ACUTE STROKE UNIT

Resources

The Joint Commission

www.jointcommission.org

The Joint Commission provides a comprehensive accreditation process for evaluation of an organization's compliance with patient safety and quality care standards. If you have concerns regarding your care or safety while in the hospital, you may contact the Joint Commission at 1-800-994-6610 or by e-mailing complaint@jointcommission.org.

American Heart Association

www.americanheart.org

1-800-242-8721

The American Heart Association (AHA) provides the public and health care organizations with credible heart disease and stroke information for effective prevention and treatment.

American Stroke Association

www.strokeassociation.org

1-888-478-7653

The American Stroke Association (ASA) offers an array of programs and educational materials to help reduce the risk of stroke as well as to help eliminate stroke as a major health problem.

Stroke: The Basics

Stroke is the nation's third leading cause of death. Every 45 seconds, someone in America has a stroke. About 700,000 Americans will have a stroke this year.

A stroke occurs when a blood vessel that carries oxygen and nutrients to the brain is either blocked or bursts. When that happens, part of the brain cannot get the blood and oxygen it needs, so it starts to die.

Knowing the warning signs and acting quickly can mean the difference between living with a permanent disability or complete recovery. The best way to prevent a stroke is to control your risk factors by increasing physical activity, preventing obesity, maintaining a healthy blood pressure and eliminating tobacco smoke exposure.

You can reduce your risk of stroke. Begin by becoming aware of your risk factors – the personal characteristics and habits that may increase your chances of having a stroke. Some risk factors you cannot change or control, but some you can. By making a few changes in your daily habits or taking medication as prescribed, you can reduce your risk of stroke. In this booklet, you will learn more about the risk factors for stroke.

What Are Your Risk Factors?

Take charge of your health! By taking this quiz you are making the first step toward better health by becoming aware of your personal risk factors. Once you have completed this quiz, you will find out which risk factors you can and can't control. Then you will need to work with your health care provider to reduce, control or prevent as many of these risk factors as possible. You'll be glad you did, and so will your loved ones.

The following factors may increase your risk. Check all boxes that apply to you. If you check two or more boxes, see a health care provider for a complete assessment of your risks.

Age and Gender. Check this box if you are:

- a man over 45 years old
- a woman over 55 years old

Family History of Stroke or Heart Attack. Check this box if:

- your mother, father, sister, brother or grandparent had a stroke
- your father or brother had a heart attack before age 55
- your mother or sister had a heart attack before age 65

High Blood Pressure. Check this box if:

- your blood pressure is 140/90 mm Hg or higher;
- a health professional has said your blood pressure is too high
- you need medication(s) to control your blood pressure
- you don't know what your blood pressure is

daytime and nighttime coverage to hospitalized patients who do not have a primary care physician, or whose primary care physicians do not have hospital practices.

For more information on services available through North Mississippi Medical Center, call (662) 377-3000 or 1-800-THE DESK (1-800-843-3375).

NMMC-Tupelo
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About North Mississippi Medical Center

North Mississippi Medical Center, a 650-bed regional referral center in Tupelo, holds the distinction of being the largest hospital in Mississippi and the largest non-metropolitan hospital in America. The medical center serves more than 650,000 people in 22 counties in north Mississippi, northwest Alabama and portions of Tennessee.

Area residents have access to a medical staff representing more than 40 medical specialties, as well as centers of excellence in cancer treatment and research, neurology, neurosurgery, cardiac surgery, cardiology, pulmonology, rehabilitation, chemical dependency and neonatal programs. In addition, the NMMC Home Health Agency and Hospice serves patients in 17 counties in north Mississippi and offers many complex and extremely high-tech procedures that can be performed in the home setting.

NMMC-Tupelo is designated as a Level II Trauma Center by the Mississippi State Department of Health. To receive this designation, facilities must offer a full range of trauma capabilities, including an Emergency Department, a full service surgical suite, intensive care unit and diagnostic imaging, as well as make a commitment to consistently meet national guidelines or standards in caring for trauma patients.

The NMMC hospitalist program has been recognized by The American Journal of Medicine for providing cost-efficient care to hospitalized patients. The program, which began in 1997, employs several internal medicine physicians who work together to provide

Tobacco Use. Check this box if:

- you smoke
- you live or work with people who smoke tobacco around you on a regular basis

Diabetes. Check this box if:

- you have a fasting blood sugar of 126 mg/dl or higher
- you need medication to lower your blood sugar level

Total Blood Cholesterol. Check this box if:

- your total blood cholesterol is 200 mg/dl or higher
- you need medication to lower your blood cholesterol level
- you don't know your level

HDL or "Good" Cholesterol. Check this box if:

- your HDL cholesterol level is less than 40 mg/dl
- you don't know your HDL cholesterol level

Physical activity. Check this box if:

- you get less than a total of 30 minutes of physical activity on most days

Overweight. Check this box if:

- you are overweight by 20 pounds or more for your height and build

Medical History. *Check this box if:*

- you have been told that you have carotid artery disease
- you have had a stroke or TIA (transient ischemic attack)
- you have a disease of the leg arteries, a high red blood cell count or sickle cell anemia

Other Heart Conditions. *Check this box if:*

- you have atrial fibrillation; coronary heart disease or other heart condition(s)
- you have had a heart attack

Several factors increase your risk of stroke. The more risk factors you have, the greater your chance of having a stroke. Some you cannot control, such as age, family health history, race and gender. But you can modify, treat or control many factors to lower your risk of stroke! The following pages outline ways to lower your risk.

Know the Warning Signs of Stroke

If you see someone experiencing any of the following stroke symptoms, call 911. Seeking treatment immediately can prevent disability.

- Trouble speaking
- Trouble seeing
- Trouble walking
- Weakness or numbness on one side
- Sudden severe headache with no known cause

What Should You Do if a Stroke Strikes?

If you experience any of the warning signs of stroke, take action immediately! Here are the most important things to remember:

- Not all warning signs occur in every stroke. **Don't ignore signs of stroke**, even if they go away!
- Check the time.** When did the first symptom start? You will be asked this important question later.
- Call 911 immediately.** If you or someone around you has one or more stroke symptoms that last more than a few minutes, don't delay!
- Advances in stroke prevention and treatment.** For example, a blood clot dissolving drug called tissue plasminogen activator (or tPA) is now available and considered a major advancement. If given within three hours of the onset of an ischemic stroke, it can reduce long-term disability or possibly reverse the effects of stroke.

Tobacco Use

People who smoke cigarettes or cigars have a much higher risk of having a stroke. Even if you don't smoke, constant exposure to other people's tobacco smoke also increases your risk. Using birth control pills and smoking cigarettes greatly increases stroke risk. When you stop smoking – no matter how long or how much you have smoked – your risk of stroke quickly drops.

Physical Inactivity

Physical inactivity increases the risk of heart disease, which raises the risk of stroke. Regular physical activity helps reduce your risk of heart disease, heart attack and stroke. Do what you can to make your life more active for a total of at least 30 minutes on all or most days of the week.

Obesity

If you have too much fat, especially in the waist, you are at higher risk for health problems, including high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, high triglycerides, diabetes, heart disease and stroke. To lose weight, you need to burn more calories than you take in. You can do this by eating healthy foods in reasonable amounts and becoming more active.

Excessive Alcohol

An average of more than one alcoholic drink a day for women or more than two drinks a day for men raises blood pressure and can lead to stroke.

Illegal Drugs

Intravenous drug abuse carries a high risk of stroke from cerebral embolism, a clot or other particle that lodges in the brain. Cocaine use has been linked to strokes and heart attacks; some strokes have been fatal even in first-time cocaine users.

What Are the Risk Factors for Stroke You Cannot Change?

Increasing Age. Stroke happens to people of all ages, even children, but the older you are, the greater your risk for stroke.

Gender. Stroke is more common in men than in women. In most age groups, more men than women will have a stroke in a given year. However, more than half of total stroke deaths occur in women. Overall, more women than men die of stroke. Use of birth control pills and pregnancy pose special stroke risks for women.

Heredity and Race. Your risk of stroke is greater if a parent, grandparent, sister or brother has had a stroke. African-Americans have a much higher risk of death from a stroke than Caucasians do. In part, this is because African-Americans have higher risk of diabetes, high blood pressure and obesity.

Prior Stroke or Heart Attack. The risk of stroke for someone who has already had one is many times that of a person who has not. If you have had a heart attack, you are also at higher risk of having a stroke.

What Risk Factors Can You Control or Treat with a Doctor's Help?

In some cases, people with health conditions described here can control them with changes in diet and exercise while others may need medication. Find out whether you have any of these conditions and follow your health care provider's advice.

High Blood Pressure

High blood pressure, or hypertension, is the most important risk factor for stroke. It's called the "silent killer," because it usually has no symptoms. High blood pressure (in an adult) is defined as a systolic pressure (top number) of 140 mm Hg or greater and/or a diastolic pressure (bottom number) of 90 mm Hg or greater that stays high over time. A blood pressure of less than 120 over 80 is considered normal in adults.

Diabetes

Diabetes mellitus is controllable, but having it greatly increases the risk of stroke. People with diabetes often also have high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol and are overweight, increasing their risk even more. Diabetes mellitus is defined as a fasting plasma glucose (blood sugar) of 126 mg/dL or more measured on two occasions.

Carotid or Other Artery Disease

The carotid arteries in your neck supply blood to your brain. A carotid artery narrowed by fatty deposits from atherosclerosis may become blocked by a blood clot. Peripheral artery disease is the narrowing of blood vessels carrying blood to leg and arm muscles. People with peripheral artery disease have a higher risk of carotid artery disease, which raises their risk of stroke.

Atrial Fibrillation or Other Heart Disease

Atrial Fibrillation (AF) is an important, treatable stroke risk factor. In AF, the heart's upper chambers quiver instead of beating effectively. This lets the blood pool and clot. If a clot breaks off, enters the bloodstream and lodges in an artery supplying blood to a part of the brain, a stroke results.

People with coronary disease or heart failure have more than twice the risk of stroke as those with hearts that work normally. Dilated cardiomyopathy (an enlarged heart), heart valve disease and some types of congenital heart defects also raise the risk of stroke.

Transient Ischemic Attacks (TIAs)

TIAs, sometimes called "mini-strokes," produce stroke-like symptoms that last less than 24 hours, but more commonly last only a few minutes to two hours. They are strong risk factors and predictors of stroke. Don't ignore TIAs – call 911 to get medical attention right away! (The stroke warning signs in the back of this booklet also apply to TIAs.)

High Blood Cholesterol

A high level of total cholesterol in the blood (240 mg/dL or higher) is a major risk factor for heart disease, which raises your risk of stroke. Recent studies show that high levels of LDL "bad" cholesterol (greater than 100 mg/dL) and triglycerides (blood fats) directly increase the risk of stroke in people with prior coronary heart disease, ischemic stroke or transient ischemic attack (TIA).

High levels of HDL "good" cholesterol (40 mg/dL or more) lower your risk of heart disease and stroke. People with a low level of HDL cholesterol (less than 40 mg/dL) have a higher risk of heart attack and stroke.