



- HOME
- ABOUT
- RISK FACTORS
 - High Blood Pressure
 - Diabetes
 - Atrial Fibrillation
 - High Cholesterol
 - Physical Inactivity
 - Poor Diet
 - Alcohol
 - Obesity
 - Smoking
 - Stress and Depression
- RESOURCES
 - Videos
 - Blog
 - Podcast
 - Useful links
 - Additional Reading
 - Media Releases

- News
-  English
 -  English
 -  Português
 -  Русский
 -  Español
 -  Français
 -  Polski

- CONTACT

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5 Facts About Obesity and Stroke Risk



All the evidence points towards a strong link between increased weight and incidence of stroke. Take a look at these interesting facts from studies around the world to understand the risk, depending on your age, weight and lifestyle.

1. Stroke risk increases by up to 73% in the obese

Research shows being overweight more than doubles your chance of having a stroke. Furthermore, one study showed young adult men with a Body Mass Index (BMI) of over 30 were 73% more likely to suffer a stroke compared to those with a normal weight (a BMI of less than 25) and young adult women were 46% more likely (1).

2. Obesity is higher in people over 60

Obesity is now a huge burden to health all over the world. Globally, the number of obese adults has tripled since 1975 (2) and it's estimated that 39% of adults, aged 18 and over, are overweight. Although obesity is a risk factor for stroke in the old and young population, in line with an ageing population, the number of people aged over 60 who are obese is on the rise (3).

3. Waist-to-hip ratio (WHR) is linked with an increased risk of stroke

A higher BMI has often been linked to an increased risk of stroke. But some studies suggest abdominal body fat is a stronger indicator of stroke risk. In one study, an increase in WHR amongst obese patients was associated with a predicted 10-year risk of stroke, making belly fat an important consideration in assessing stroke risk (4).

4. The risk of death by stroke rises with increasing BMI

Research suggests the heavier you are, the more chance you have of dying by stroke. People who are classed as overweight (with a BMI of 25 to 29.9) are almost twice as likely to die from coronary heart disease as those who are a healthy weight. When the BMI is over 33 the relative risk rises to almost 3.5 times. Similar trends have been demonstrated in the relationship between obesity and stroke.

Overall, obesity is estimated to increase the cardiovascular mortality rate four-fold and remains the greatest preventable health-related cause of death other

than smoking (5).

5. Meeting three lifestyle goals could reduce stroke risk

Although it's hard to determine whether weight loss alone reduces the risk of stroke, studies show that when people stick to three simple lifestyle changes, such as quitting smoking, doing more exercise or losing weight, the number of strokes is decreased. Furthermore, eating a healthy, low-fat diet also helps to control blood pressure, diabetes and other stroke risk factors (6).

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