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 64% in the obese

People with a Body Mass Index (BMI) of over 30 are 2–3 times more likely to suffer a stroke compared to those with a normal weight (a BMI of less than 25). Plus, the risk goes up, the more you weigh. Studies show the risk of ischaemic stroke (the result of an obstruction in the blood vessels supplying the brain) increases by 22% for overweight people and 64% in obese individuals (1,2,3).

2. Obesity is higher in people over 60

Obesity is now a huge burden to health all over the world. In America, the number of obese adults has tripled since 1980 (4) and it’s estimated that 51.6% of people in Europe are overweight. Although obesity is a risk factor for stroke in the old and young population, there are fewer people who are obese in the ‘18–14’ age
bracket, and more people in the ‘65 to 74’ age range (5).

3. **Waist-to-hip ratio (WHR) is linked with a 5% increased risk of stroke**

A higher Body Mass Index (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. Even a small increase in WHR (your waist measurement divided by your hip measurement) can equate to a 5% increase in cardiovascular disease such as heart attack, chest pain or stroke (6,7).

4. **The risk of death by stroke increases by 40% for every excess 5kg of weight**

Research suggests the heavier you are, the more chance you have of dying by stroke. People who are classed as overweight, obese or morbidly obese (with a BMI of between 25 to 50) have a 40% increase in stroke mortality for each additional 5kg of weight. That means for every 11 pounds of additional weight, your risk goes up. Whereas people with a BMI of less than 24 show no increased risk (8).

5. **Meeting 3 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 patients 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 (9).

References:


