



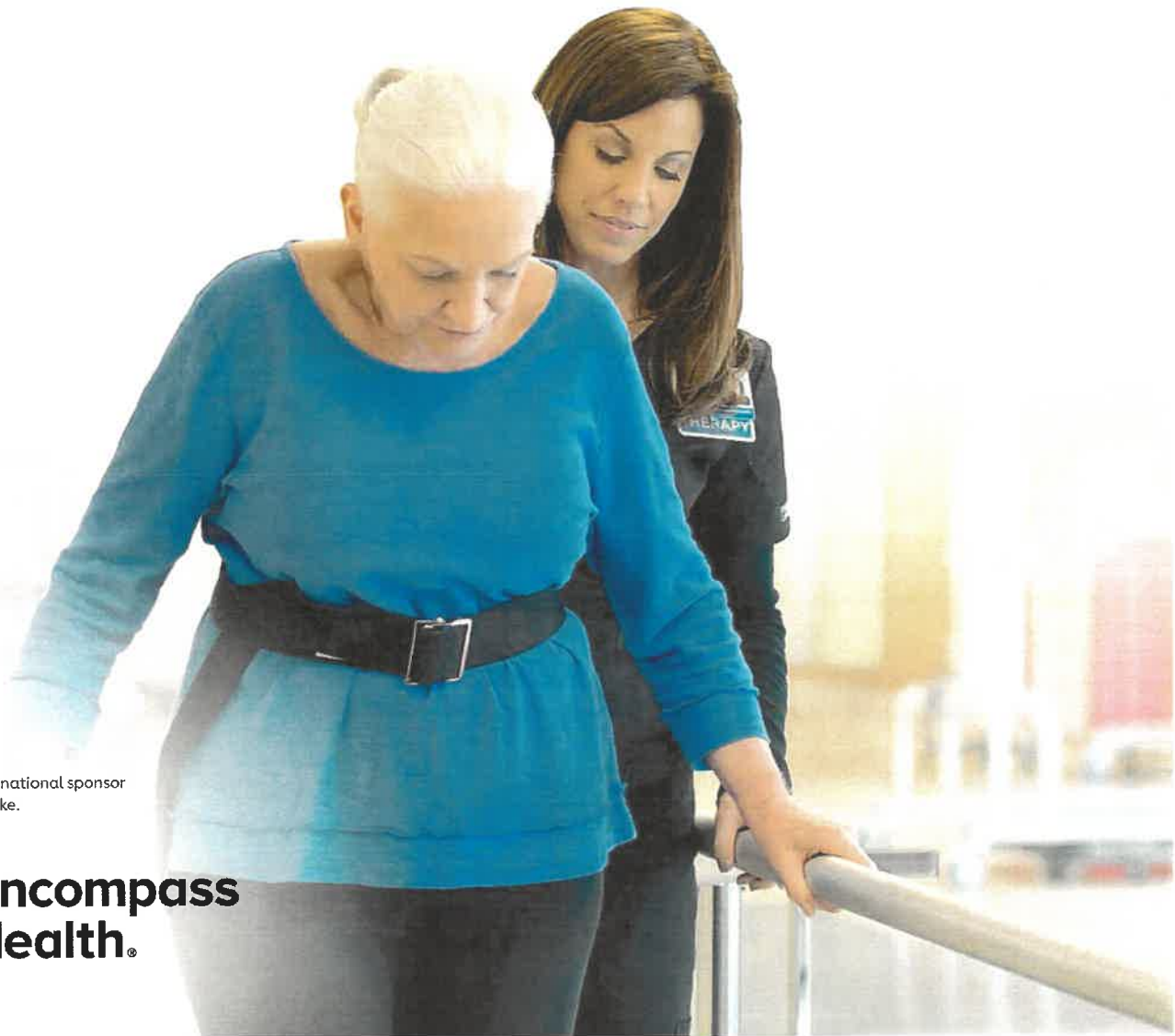
American Stroke Association.  
A division of the American Heart Association.

Together to End Stroke®

**A GUIDE FOR PATIENTS  
AND CAREGIVERS**

# LIFE AFTER STROKE

Our Path Forward



Encompass Health is a national sponsor  
of Together to End Stroke.



**Encompass  
Health.**

# PREVENTING ANOTHER STROKE

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Each stroke survivor has their own unique set of risk factors that contributed to their stroke. Knowing the underlying cause of your stroke is important to preventing another one.

Certain traits and lifestyle choices increase the chance of having a stroke. Although some risk factors can't be controlled, most can be managed.

## Risk factors you can't control

- Increasing age
- Gender
- Race
- Family and personal medical history
- Prior stroke, TIA or heart attack

## Risk factors you can manage or control

- High blood pressure
- Smoking
- Diabetes
- High cholesterol
- Physical inactivity
- Obesity and being overweight
- Carotid or other artery disease
- Atrial fibrillation (AFib) or other heart disease
- Excessive alcohol intake
- Illegal drug use
- Sleep apnea

*You can greatly reduce your risk of another stroke with the right lifestyle choices and a good medical management plan.*

## Lifestyle choices

You can modify many of the risk factors you may have by the personal choices you make each day.

- Don't smoke or use other forms of tobacco and avoid second-hand smoke.
- Adults with chronic conditions or disabilities, who are able, should do at least 150 minutes a week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity, preferably spread throughout the week. Regular physical activity can help control cholesterol, diabetes and weight. It can also help lower blood pressure and reduce your stroke risk.
- Try to reach and maintain a healthy weight. To lose weight, you need to take in less calories than you burn.
- Follow a heart-healthy diet that includes fruits and vegetables, whole-grains, fat-free or low-fat dairy products, skinless poultry, fish, nontropical vegetable oils, legumes (dried beans and peas), and unsalted nuts and seeds. And limit your intake of saturated and trans fats, red meat, sodium and added sugars.
- If you drink alcohol, limit it to one drink a day for women or two drinks a day for men.

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## Medications

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Every stroke survivor is unique. In order to prevent another stroke, work with your health care provider and rehabilitation team. They'll tailor a medication program that's best for you.

Be sure to take your medications as directed. Never stop taking them without talking with your health care provider. And, don't be afraid to ask questions.

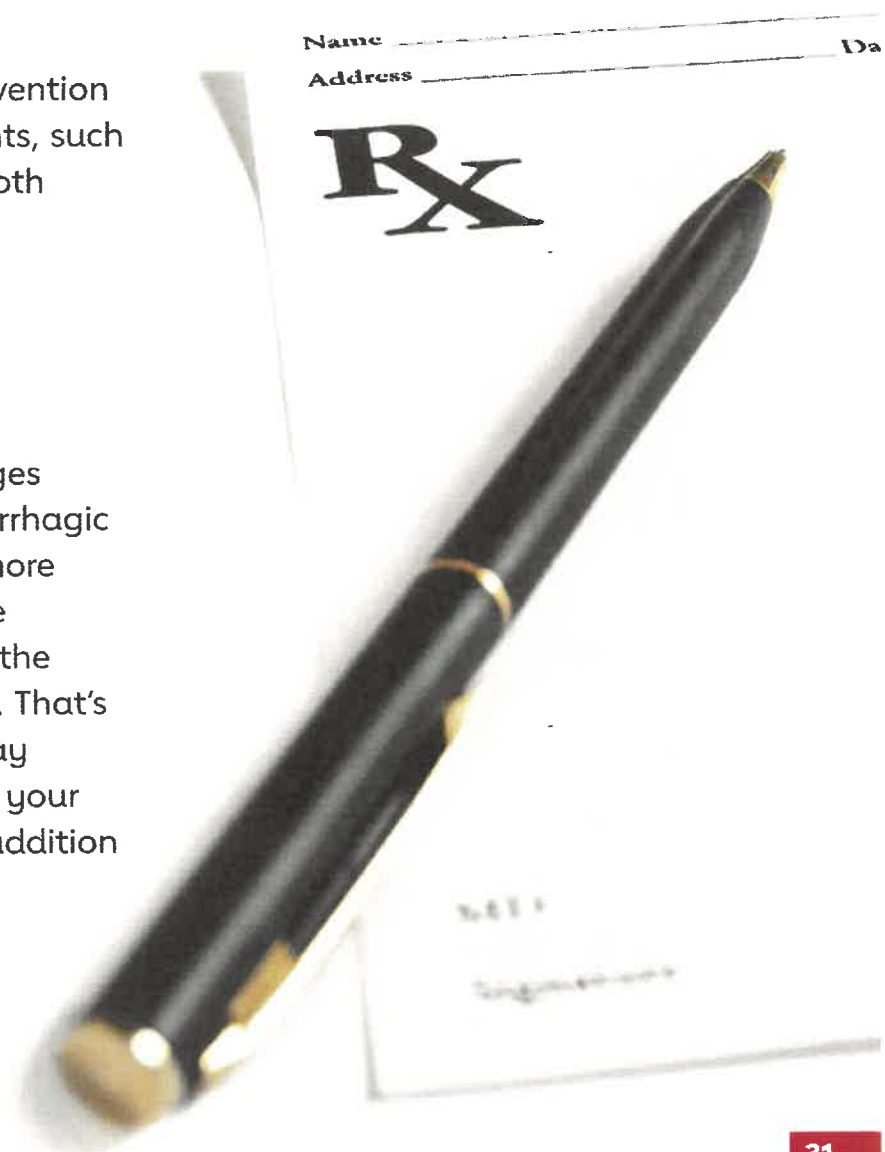
The following are some of the common reasons medications are prescribed after stroke.

### Preventing blood clots

The two main types of stroke-prevention medicines are anti-platelets agents, such as aspirin, and anticoagulants. Both prevent blood clots from forming.

### Reducing blood pressure and cholesterol

High blood pressure (HBP) damages arteries so they may burst (hemorrhagic stroke) or clog (ischemic stroke) more easily. High cholesterol can cause clogged arteries, which increases the potential for a blood clot to form. That's why your health care provider may prescribe medicines to help lower your blood pressure or cholesterol, in addition to lifestyle changes.



## Managing diabetes

People with poorly controlled blood sugar are at increased risk of stroke. If you have diabetes and have been prescribed insulin or any other medications, follow your health care provider's advice closely. This will help lower your chances of having another stroke.

## Managing atrial fibrillation (AFib)

People with AFib have a five times greater risk of stroke. Medications are often prescribed to prevent and treat blood clots which can lead to a stroke. Additional drugs may be prescribed to control heart rate and rhythm. These medications may also be used in conjunction with other treatments.

## Preventing seizure

After having a stroke, some patients are at risk of having seizures. Your health care provider or rehabilitation team can tell you if anti-seizure medications are right for you.

## Managing depression

Depression is common after a stroke. Left untreated, it can have long-term impact on your recovery and life. The good news is that there are very effective medications for depression. If you or a family member think you may be depressed, talk to your health care provider about how medications may help.



# SIGNS & SYMPTOMS OF STROKE

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Stroke survivors are at an increased risk for another stroke. Knowing the warning signs for stroke may help save your life or the life of someone you love. And, getting quick treatment may improve the chances of survival and getting better faster.

The signs or symptoms of a stroke can appear suddenly. Not every person has all of them. When you see ANY of them, act quickly.

## The signs or symptoms of a stroke are:

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden severe headache with no known cause

## If stroke warning signs occur:

- Do not ignore them, even if they go away! Some people may have only one or two signs. Other people may have more.
- Check the time when the symptoms first started. You will be asked this important question later.
- Act fast. **Call 911** or your emergency response number right away.

**Stroke is a medical emergency.  
Every second counts!**

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**F.A.S.T. is an easy way to remember how to recognize a stroke and what to do.**

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**SPOT A  
STROKE  
F.A.S.T.**

**F.A.S.T.**

Face  
Drooping

Arm  
Weakness

Speech  
Difficulty

Time to  
Call 911