

## MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

### Member blog – Cardiovascular health

The following health and wellbeing blog has been prepared by TAL for use by partner superannuation funds for their members. It is available to use in white-label format for communications and is designed to provide information for members on positive ways to support their physical health.

-BLOG-

#### Reducing your risk of stroke

Strokes are the third most common cause of death in Australia and a leading cause of disability according to [The Brain Foundation](#). Around 55,000 Australians will have a stroke so it's important to know what factors can help reduce your risk of stroke<sup>1</sup>.

Dr Priya Chagan, General Manager Health Services at our insurance partner [TAL](#), shares information on strokes and ways we can reduce our risk.

##### What is a stroke?

A stroke is a medical condition that can affect anyone of any age. Most strokes happen in one of two ways:

1. When there is a blockage of an artery (a type of blood vessel) in your brain, which restricts blood flow to parts of the brain; or
2. When there is a rupture or break in the wall of a blood vessel in your brain, which causes bleeding in the brain.

##### What factors can reduce your risk of a stroke?

Did you know 80% of strokes can be prevented?<sup>2</sup> There are many risk factors that can contribute to strokes, some which you cannot change, but many that you can. By making simple lifestyle changes, you can control some of your risk factors.

##### How high blood pressure can increase your risk of having a stroke

Having persistently high blood pressure damages the blood vessel walls and can cause blood clots or plaques to break off artery walls and block the blood flow in an artery supplying the brain and other organs. Uncontrolled high blood pressure is often called “the silent killer” because it has no symptoms. That's why it's important to get your blood pressure checked regularly.

##### How smoking can increase your risk of having a stroke

Both active smoking and being exposed to second-hand smoke increases your risk of having a stroke. It reduces the amount of oxygen in your blood and damages blood vessel walls which can increase the chance of clogging in the arteries of the brain and heart. Quitting smoking can be a challenge, but [Doctors on Demand](#) offer free Quit Smoking consultations and resources to help.

## **How being overweight can increase your risk of having a stroke**

Carrying excess body weight can increase your risk of developing high blood pressure, diabetes and high cholesterol. High cholesterol can contribute to the fatty deposits on the walls of an artery, which can restrict the blood flow to the brain, or dislodge and block an artery in the brain. Tackling weight loss can be difficult but you can take some [simple steps](#) to embrace a healthy and active lifestyle.

## **How a poor diet can increase your risk of having a stroke**

Having a diet that is consistently high in saturated or trans fats and high in sodium (salt) can increase your risk of a stroke. Drinking large amounts of alcohol can also increase your risk of stroke so it's important to limit your intake. Speak with your GP or a registered dietician if you'd like more information.

## **What are the signs of a stroke?**

It is important to be familiar with the symptoms of a stroke and call an ambulance as soon as possible.

Facial weakness, arm weakness with or without leg weakness, and difficulty with speech are the most common symptoms or signs of stroke, but other signs of stroke can be:

- Weakness, numbness or paralysis of the face, arm or leg on either or both sides of the body
- Difficulty speaking or understanding
- Dizziness, loss of balance or unexplained fall
- Loss of vision, sudden blurring or decreased vision in one or both eyes
- Headache, usually severe and abrupt in onset or unexplained change in the pattern of headaches
- Difficulty swallowing

These signs can appear alone or in combination. When symptoms disappear within 24 hours, this may be a mini stroke or Transient Ischaemic Attack (TIA).

If you are rushed to hospital with a suspected stroke, your health care team will perform tests to confirm the diagnosis and determine which treatment is best for you.

If you or someone around you experiences these symptoms, call triple zero (000) right away and ask for an ambulance. If you'd like to find out more about stroke, visit the [Stroke Foundation](#) website or speak with your GP.

## **REFERENCES**

1. [The Brain Foundation](#)
2. [Stroke Foundation](#)

**-ENDS-**

DISCLAIMER [please add to your post]

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