

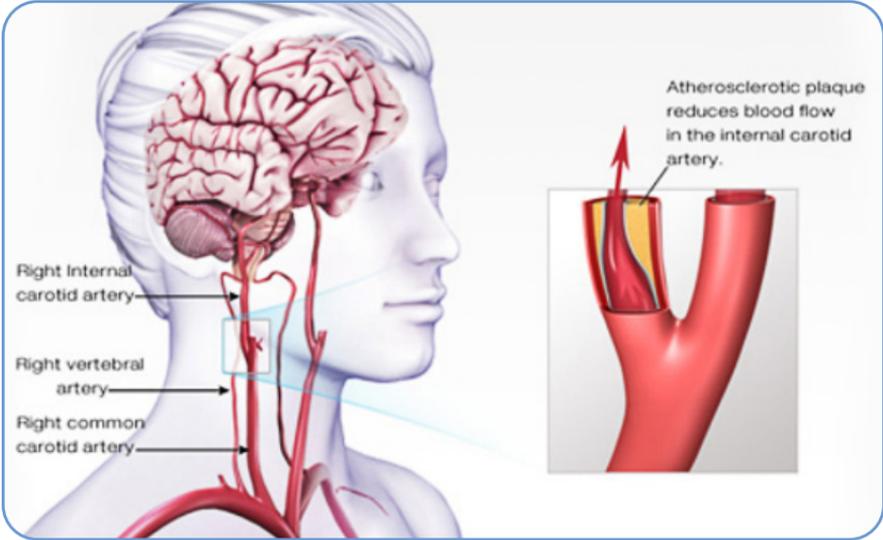
# Understanding **Stroke** and **TIA** Prevention



Regional Stroke Network  
Réseau Régional des AVC

**CHAMPLAIN**

[champlainregionalstrokenetwork.org](http://champlainregionalstrokenetwork.org)



## You've Had a Stroke Or TIA...

The goal of this booklet is to help you learn more about TIA and stroke, especially how to prevent another one in the future.



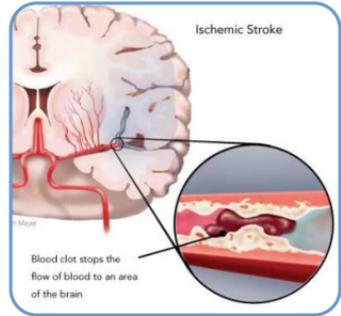
What Causes a Transient Ischemic Attack (TIA) or Stroke? .....	4
What Are My Stroke Risk Factors?.....	5
How Can I Address My Risk Factors?.....	6
What Are My Targets? .....	7
My SMART goals.....	8
Get Active.....	9
Eating Habits .....	10,11
Measure Your Own Blood Pressure .....	12
Quit Smoking.....	13
Stress Reduction & Wellness.....	14
Your Medications.....	15
Common Stroke Prevention Medications.....	16,17
Atrial Fibrillation .....	18,19
Education Workshops.....	20
Educate Yourself: Online and Local Resources.....	21
My Follow Up Plan.....	22
Learn the Signs of Stroke.....	23

## What Causes a TIA or Stroke?

### **Ischemic Stroke**

Stroke is caused by the stoppage of blood flow to the brain. Stroke can be caused by either:

- A travelling blood clot from another area of body such as the heart.
- Build-up of plaque in an artery caused by high blood pressure and high cholesterol among other factors.



A stroke is a sudden loss of brain function to the area affected. Stroke symptoms depend on where the brain was injured, and how much damage has occurred. A stroke can impact a number of areas controlled by the brain, including your speech, strength, vision, or feeling. These changes generally occur on only one side of the body.

### **Transient Ischemic Attack (TIA)**

A TIA is sometimes called a mini-stroke. It happens when a clot stops blood from flowing to the brain for a short time. The symptoms of a TIA can be the same as the symptoms of a stroke except they get better within a few minutes or hours. Having a TIA is a warning sign. It tells you that you have a higher risk of having a stroke.



## What Are My Stroke Risk Factors?

Some risk factors include your age or family history which we cannot change. The risk factors below can be improved through specific lifestyle changes that will be discussed in this booklet.

✓ *Check those that apply to you.*

**High Blood Pressure**.....



**Smoking**.....



**Unhealthy Eating**.....



**Uncontrolled Diabetes**.....



**Abdominal Obesity**.....



**Inactivity**.....



**High Blood Cholesterol**.....



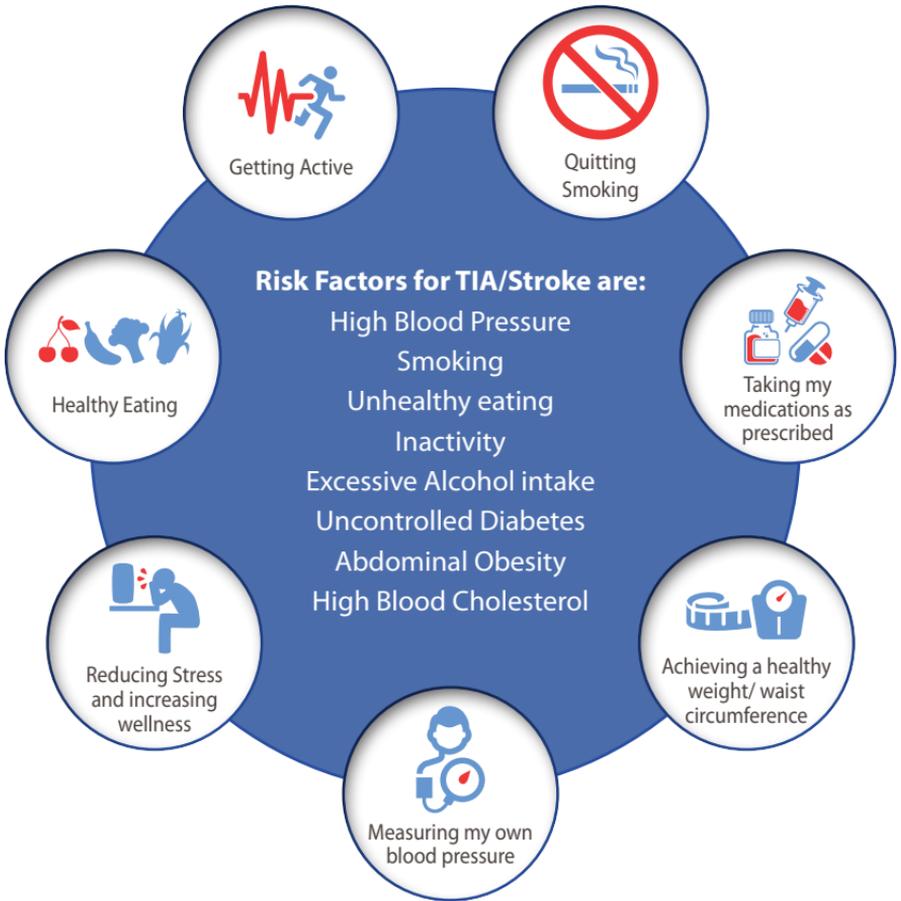
**Excessive Alcohol Intake**.....



Looking For more Information? Visit [www.heartandstroke.com](http://www.heartandstroke.com)



## How Can I Address My Risk Factors?



## What Are My Targets?

CURRENT LEVELS	TARGET LEVELS	THINGS I'M CONSIDERING									
Today's date: _____ Today's blood pressure: _____	 <p>Systolic (mm Hg) Diastolic (mm Hg)</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Below 140</td> <td>Below 130</td> <td>Below 135</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Below 90</td> <td>Below 80</td> <td>Below 85</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>CLINIC</b></td> <td><b>DIABETES</b></td> <td><b>AT HOME</b></td> </tr> </table>	Below 140	Below 130	Below 135	Below 90	Below 80	Below 85	<b>CLINIC</b>	<b>DIABETES</b>	<b>AT HOME</b>	
Below 140	Below 130	Below 135									
Below 90	Below 80	Below 85									
<b>CLINIC</b>	<b>DIABETES</b>	<b>AT HOME</b>									
Cholesterol: _____ LDL: _____ Triglycerides: _____ Non HDL-C: _____ HDL: _____	<p>Total: &lt;5.2</p> <p>LDL: &lt; _____</p> <p>Triglycerides: &lt;1.7</p> <p>Non HDL-C &lt; 2.6</p> <p>HDL: Above 1.0 (men) or 1.3 (women)</p> 										
HbA1C: _____ Fasting blood sugar: _____	<p>For most people: HbA1C: <b>7% or less</b></p> <p>Fasting blood sugar: <b>4-7</b> mmol/L</p> 										
<input type="checkbox"/> Smoking <input type="checkbox"/> Cutting back <input type="checkbox"/> Non-Smoker	<p>Smoke and tobacco free</p> 										
Waist circumference: _____	<p>Men: &lt;102 cm (40")</p> <p>Women: &lt;88cm (35")</p> 										
Exercise: minutes/day: _____ days/week: _____	<p><b>150 minutes</b> moderate to vigorous activity per week in <b>periods of 10 minutes or more</b></p> 										
Drinks/week _____	<p><b>Women: Below 10</b> drinks a week to a <b>maximum of 2 per day</b></p> <p><b>Men: Below 15</b> drinks a week to a <b>maximum of 3 per day</b></p> <p><i>In some cases No alcohol intake</i></p> 										
Meals/day: _____ Fruits and veggies/day: _____	<p><b>3 meals</b> per day  <b>7 servings</b> of <b>fruit and vegetables</b> per day</p> 										

## My SMART Goals



Set SMART goals that are **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant, and **T**ime-bound goals.

Now that you know what your risk factors are, talk with your stroke team or with a doctor to pinpoint a few risks that YOU feel that you can address. The next few pages will give you more information, tools, and ideas to be able to address these factors.

**S**pecific *What EXACTLY do you want to achieve?*

**M**easurable *How will you know when you've achieved it?*

**A**ttainable *Is it something that you have control over?*

**R**elevant *Is it applicable to the place you are in your life right now?*

**T**ime-bound *What is your deadline?*

AREA TO ADDRESS	MY SMART GOAL	TIME FRAME	BIGGEST CHALLENGE	POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS
Inactivity	To exercise at least twice a week for 30 min at a time	By the end of the season	I don't like exercising alone	Join an exercise group or go to the gym with a friend
I'm not sure if my blood pressure is high	Log my blood pressure twice a day	For two weeks	I cannot afford or I don't know where to buy a machine	Ask my doctor for prescription

Looking for more information? Visit [www.livinghealthyhamplain.ca](http://www.livinghealthyhamplain.ca)  
To register for a FREE Self-Management workshop.

## Get Active

Regular exercise helps to lower your blood pressure and blood cholesterol levels. Exercise also helps you to reduce weight, and stay in good health. Here are a few tips to get started:



- *Start slowly. For example take short walks; slowly increase the length of your walk (as your physical health improves). Tip: over time, aim for 10,000 steps per day*
- *Involve family and friends in exercise*
- *Try to make exercise a part of every day. Walk to work, or exercise on your break at lunch time*
- *If you are planning to become more physically active than you are now, first check with your doctor*
- *List the activities you like, try to involve them in your everyday life:*

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***The goal is to achieve at least 150 minute of moderate to vigorous exercise per week in periods of 10 minutes or more***

Looking for more information?  
Visit <https://heartwise.ottawaheart.ca/>

  
UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA  
HEART INSTITUTE  
INSTITUT DE CARDIOLOGIE  
DE L'UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA

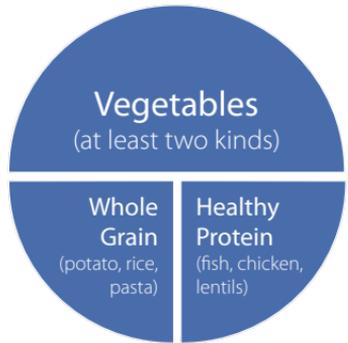


## Eating Habits

Healthy foods have a **HUGE** impact on improving your cholesterol, blood pressure, diabetes, and weight. Simple changes kept over time can decrease your risk of stroke, improve energy, and overall health.

Divide your plate into sections to include:

- ½ vegetables,
- ¼ whole grain,
- and ¼ healthy protein for each meal.



- Eat whole grains and cereals.
- Aim for 7 servings of fruits and vegetables each day.
- Eat fish twice a week.
- Eat beans, chickpeas and lentils more often.
- Use lower-fat dairy products such as skim milk and low-fat cheese.
- For snacks, try whole-grain crackers with hummus, plain popcorn, a few unsalted nuts, or fruit.
- Reduce your intake of saturated fat. Use plant-based fats, such as olive or canola oil.
- Eat at regular times. Include breakfast within 1 to 2 hours of waking up.
- Limit dietary salt to fewer than 2000 mg per day.
- Cook at home more often to avoid processed foods.

### Looking to improve your nutrition or manage your weight?

*TIP: Write down the foods you eat. Review your food diary with a dietician.*

Looking for more information? Visit <http://www.unlockfood.ca> and read Canada's Food Guide



## To Estimate Portion Sizes Use Your **HAND**:

Based on an average-sized woman's hand:



1. Use your two open hands to guide you in selecting a healthy serving of vegetables.
2. Use your fist to select a healthy portion of grain products. Your serving of rice or pasta should be equal to your fist.
3. Use your palm to measure a healthy serving of meat and alternatives. Your chicken breast or lean steak should be the size of your palm.
4. Include a fist-size serving of fruit with or between your meals.
5. Use a thumb tip-size serving of fat. Choose fats that are heart-healthy.

Aim for 7 servings of vegetables and fruit.

*This is what it looks like:*



**1 small apple**



**1 large Corn**



**1 large orange**



**1 medium pear**



**1 large Banana**



**12 baby carrots or  
2 medium carrots**



**½ of a medium  
cucumber**



**1 small wedge  
of watermelon**

## Measure Your Own Blood Pressure (BP)

What device do I use?



**Chose an approved automatic arm device** ([www.hypertension.ca](http://www.hypertension.ca)), for example Omron® or LifeSource®.

**Ensure your cuff is a good fit**

- On the side of the box, it will tell you the cuff fit range.
- My arm circumference is: \_\_\_\_\_ cm/ \_\_\_\_\_ inches.

**Check that your device is working properly**

Bring your device to your next health care visit to compare the BP reading from your device with the office machine.

How do I measure my blood pressure?



**When monitoring blood pressure at home:**

- Rest quietly for 5 minutes beforehand
- Sit with your legs uncrossed, feet flat on the floor
- Get comfortable, with your back and arm supported, with your arm at heart level
- Apply cuff on a bare arm, 3 cm above elbow crease
- Do not talk or move during monitoring

When do I check it?



**Measure BP twice in the morning and twice in the evening (Take BP 1 minute apart, write down the second reading)**

- For 7 days before a doctors' appointment;
- After a change in medication;
- Or as directed by your health provider.

**Try to select a time:**

- Before taking your medications
- After emptying your bladder
- When you have not had caffeine or tobacco for 1 hour
- When you have not exercised within 30 minutes

**A good time to check your blood pressure may be:**

- Before breakfast and 2 hours after dinner

**Keep a record of your BP readings**

- Use a log sheet or diary
- Share your readings with your health provider

What are my BP targets?



**For most people, your target should be below 135/85 mm HG at home. My target: \_\_\_\_\_**

Please speak with your health care professional about targets that are right for you. If your average readings are above target, call to set up an appointment with your family health care provider.

## Quit Smoking

Quitting smoking is the single most important thing you can do for your health!

It will greatly reduce your risk of a stroke.

Here are some tips to get started:

- Pick a quit date in the next 30 days. Cut down the number of cigarettes you smoke today.
- Make your home and car smoke free zones.
- Discuss quit smoking medications with your doctor to see which is right for you.
- Think about times when you feel tempted to smoke. Come up with a plan of what you will do instead
  - For example: I may feel tempted to smoke on breaks at work therefore I will take a walk on breaks instead.
- Explore community resources to help support you with quitting and to help keep you smoke-free.



Situation	My Plan

***For more information on resources in our region  
call Telehealth Ontario at 1866-797-0000 for 24 hour support***



## Stress Reduction and Wellness

We all have stress in our lives. Sometimes it can be difficult to manage. Stress can make it hard to be healthy. It can affect your food choices and your sleep. It is important to find ways to cope with stress when you experience it.

Focus on activities in the past that has helped you relax, such as exercise, meditation, or spending time with loved ones. Make sure that you take time for yourself and engage in activities that are helpful. Laugh more often and take deep breaths when you feel stress coming on. Share your feelings with your loved ones.

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If stress is interfering with your normal activities, talk about it with your doctor.

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After any health event you may find that you have some problems with your emotions or you may feel depressed. While this can be normal, it is important to speak with your doctor or Nurse Practitioner.

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You may find that your sexual intimacy has changed with your partner. Be patient and resume sexual activity at a pace that is comfortable for you.

Speak with your doctor if you have concerns.

*Looking for more information?  
Visit [www.heartandstroke.on.ca/](http://www.heartandstroke.on.ca/)  
and search "coping with stress"*

*The Walk in Counselling Clinic  
Visit [www.walkincounselling.com](http://www.walkincounselling.com)*



## Your Medications

The stroke team or your family doctor may have started you on some new medication. It is very important to take medications properly. If you have any questions or concerns please speak with your doctor or nurse practitioner or pharmacist before stopping your medication. Here are some more tips:



Ask questions about your medications, know why they were prescribed, and what to expect.



Keep a list of your medications on you at all times.



Take your medication at the same time every day.



Report any side effects to your healthcare team so that other options can be considered.

*For more information about your medications, speak with your pharmacist, nurse or doctor.*

### 1. New Medication Name:

Reason it was prescribed

Notes

### 2. New Medication Name:

Reason it was prescribed

Notes

*TIP: Use a Dosette/Pill Organizer or Blister Pack to help you set up a routine for taking your medications. Ask your pharmacist to find out how you can obtain them.*



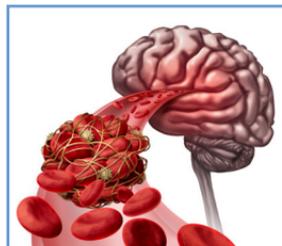
## Common Stroke Prevention Medications

### **Antiplatelet medications:**

Antiplatelet medications help to keep platelets in your blood from sticking together and forming clots. This helps to improve blood flow and reduces your risk of a future stroke or heart attack.

Commonly used antiplatelet medications include:

- ✓ ASA (Aspirin®)
- ✓ Clopidogrel (Plavix®)
- ✓ ASA/extended-release dipyridamole (Aggrenox®)

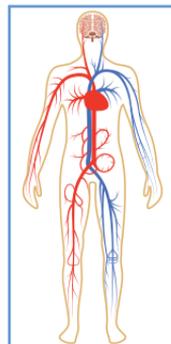


### **Anticoagulation medications:**

Anticoagulant medications work to prevent blood clots and are stronger than antiplatelets. They are often known as “blood thinners”. Common reasons for this type of treatment include heart rhythm disorders such as atrial fibrillation. This medication helps to prevent a clot from forming and reduces your risk of a future stroke or heart attack.

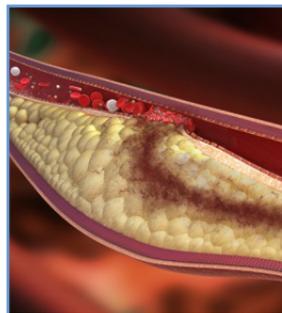
Commonly used anticoagulation medications include:

- ✓ Apixaban (Eliquis®)
- ✓ Rivaroxaban (Xarelto®)
- ✓ Edoxaban (Lixiana®)
- ✓ Dabigatran (Pradaxa®)
- ✓ Warfarin (Coumadin®)



### **Cholesterol lowering medications:**

Statins help lower your body’s production of LDL cholesterol (often referred to as “bad” cholesterol). High LDL has been associated with atherosclerosis, often called “hardening of the arteries”. Statins are recommended for patients with high cholesterol, diabetes, or a history of heart disease or stroke to reduce the risk of future complications.



Commonly used cholesterol lowering medications include:

- ✓ Atorvastatin (Lipitor®)
- ✓ Pravastatin (Prevachol®)
- ✓ Simvastatin (Zocor®)
- ✓ Lovastatin (Mevacor®)
- ✓ Rosuvastatin (Crestor®)

**Blood pressure medications:** Blood pressure is the force of blood against your blood vessels as it circulates through your body. High blood pressure can damage your blood vessels and is a major risk factor for stroke or heart disease. There are many options for blood pressure treatment. Often, more than one medication is needed to attain good blood pressure control.



## Atrial Fibrillation

The heart's job is to pump blood around the body. Normally, it does so with a squeezing action which we call our heartbeat, and beats in a steady, regular rhythm.

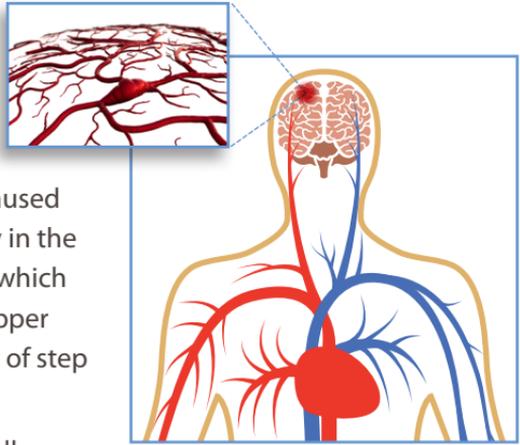
### **What is Atrial Fibrillation?**

Atrial fibrillation (AFib) is a condition that causes the heart to beat irregularly. This is caused by disorganized electrical activity in the top chambers (part) of the heart which are called the atria. In AFib, the upper chambers beat too quickly or out of step with the lower chambers.

In AFib, irregular blood flow can allow blood to pool and form a clot in the heart. The clot can then be pumped out of the heart and travel to the brain, which can cause a blockage, leading to a stroke or TIA.

***Having AFib greatly increases your risk of a stroke, which means following your doctor's advice to reduce your risk of a stroke is very important.***

A person with atrial fibrillation may not feel the irregular heart beat or experience any symptoms; however it is still serious since it increases the risk of stroke.



**How is Atrial Fibrillation diagnosed and treated?**

Atrial Fibrillation is a rhythm that can come and go. You may have one or more of the following tests to look for this rhythm:

- Electrocardiogram ECG (A short recording)
- Holter Monitor ( 72 hours and 14 day recording device)

**Treatment**

Blood thinners (anticoagulation medications) are used to prevent blood clots from forming when you are in AFib (see page 16) . The type of blood thinner depends on your medical conditions or stroke risk factors. Please speak to your health care provider about what is the best choice of medication for you.

It is recommended that you **wear a medical alert bracelet or necklace** to notify medical providers that you have AFib and you are taking anticoagulation medication in cases of emergency.

<http://www.ccs.ca/en/resources/patient-education>



## Education Workshops

There several education workshops and resources for Stroke Prevention that we offer in collaboration with community programs. Most of these programs are accessible during the day or in the evening for your convenience. Self-referral is encouraged.

***What are you interested in signing up for today?***

### **Self-Management**

Attend a free Self-Management Workshop aimed at giving you tools to live a healthy life. Available in person or online.

Visit [www.livinghealthyhamplain.ca](http://www.livinghealthyhamplain.ca) or Call 1-877-240-3941

Online workshops: Visit [www.ontarioselfmanagement.ca](http://www.ontarioselfmanagement.ca)

### **Dietary Information**

Speak to a dietitian at Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000

Nutrition Workshops at the Heart Institute: Contact 613-696-7000 extension 19641

Visit <https://pwc.ottawaheart.ca/education/heart-healthy-workshops>

### **Heart Institute Quit Smoking Program**

Please contact 613-696-7069

Email: [quitsmoking@ottawaheart.ca](mailto:quitsmoking@ottawaheart.ca)

### **Ottawa Community Diabetes Education Programs**

Visit <http://diabetesottawa.ca/>

Available across the region. Call 613-238-3722

### **Heart Wise Exercise**

Physical Activity Program information.

Visit <http://heartwise.ottawaheart.ca/>

### **Counselling and Peer Support**

For Community of survivors and Care supporters

Visit <https://www.heartandstroke.ca/heart/recovery-and-support/the-power-of-community>

### **The Walk in Counselling Clinic (Free/No Cost)**

Available at various locations in Champlain

Please contact 613-755-2277

Visit [www.walkincounselling.com](http://www.walkincounselling.com)



## **Educate Yourself: Online and Local Resources**

### **General Stroke Information**

[www.heartandstroke.ca](http://www.heartandstroke.ca) or 1-888-HSF-INFO

[www.canadianstrokenetwork.ca/en/service/taking-action-towards-optimal-stroke-care/](http://www.canadianstrokenetwork.ca/en/service/taking-action-towards-optimal-stroke-care/)

### **Dietary Information**

[www.unlockfood.ca](http://www.unlockfood.ca)

[www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php)

### **Information About Exercise**

[www.csep.ca/en/guidelines](http://www.csep.ca/en/guidelines)

### **Quit Smoking Information**

[www.smokershelpline.ca](http://www.smokershelpline.ca)

### **Diabetes Information**

[www.diabetes.ca](http://www.diabetes.ca)

<http://diabetesottawa.ca/>

### **Information About High Blood Pressure**

[www.Hypertension.ca](http://www.Hypertension.ca)

### **Additional Healthy Living Information**

Champlain Health Line Resource Hub [www.champlainhealthline.ca](http://www.champlainhealthline.ca)

[www.medicalert.ca](http://www.medicalert.ca)

Family Doctor Search (Health Care Connect) 1-800-445-1822

<https://hcc3.hcc.moh.gov.on.ca>

## My Follow Up Plan

**My Neurologist**

**Contact Number:**

### Future Tests and Recommendations:

Test	Date	Location/Instructions

### Please Note:

All test results and your clinic visit note will be sent to your Family Doctor.

Schedule a visit with your Family Doctor to discuss the results of any tests that were not yet available at the time of your visit at the Stroke Prevention Clinic.

To obtain a copy of your test results or clinic visit note, please contact the Health Records Department where you have been seen.

- The Ottawa Hospital Health Records:  
Call 613-737-8800  
Email for online access at [mychart@toh.ca](mailto:mychart@toh.ca)
- Cornwall Community Hospital Health Records:  
Call 613-938-4240 extension 2247
- Pembroke Regional Hospital Health Records:  
Call 613-732-2811 extension 6166
- Queensway Carleton Hospital health Records:  
Call 613-721-2000 extension 2802

Stroke is a medical emergency. Recognize and respond immediately to any of these signs. Call 9-1-1.

## Learn the Signs of Stroke

- F** **ace** is it drooping?
- A** **rms** can you raise both?
- S** **peech** is it slurred or jumbled?
- T** **ime** to call 9-1-1 right away?

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## Stroke and TIA are a Medical Emergency

Signs of stroke are a serious warning that something is wrong with the blood flow to your brain. Doctors may be able to give you drugs or treatment that will make blood flow back to your brain again which are time sensitive.

Call 911, you can get help faster.  
Call 911 even if the symptoms go away.



# Understanding **Stroke** and **TIA** Prevention

