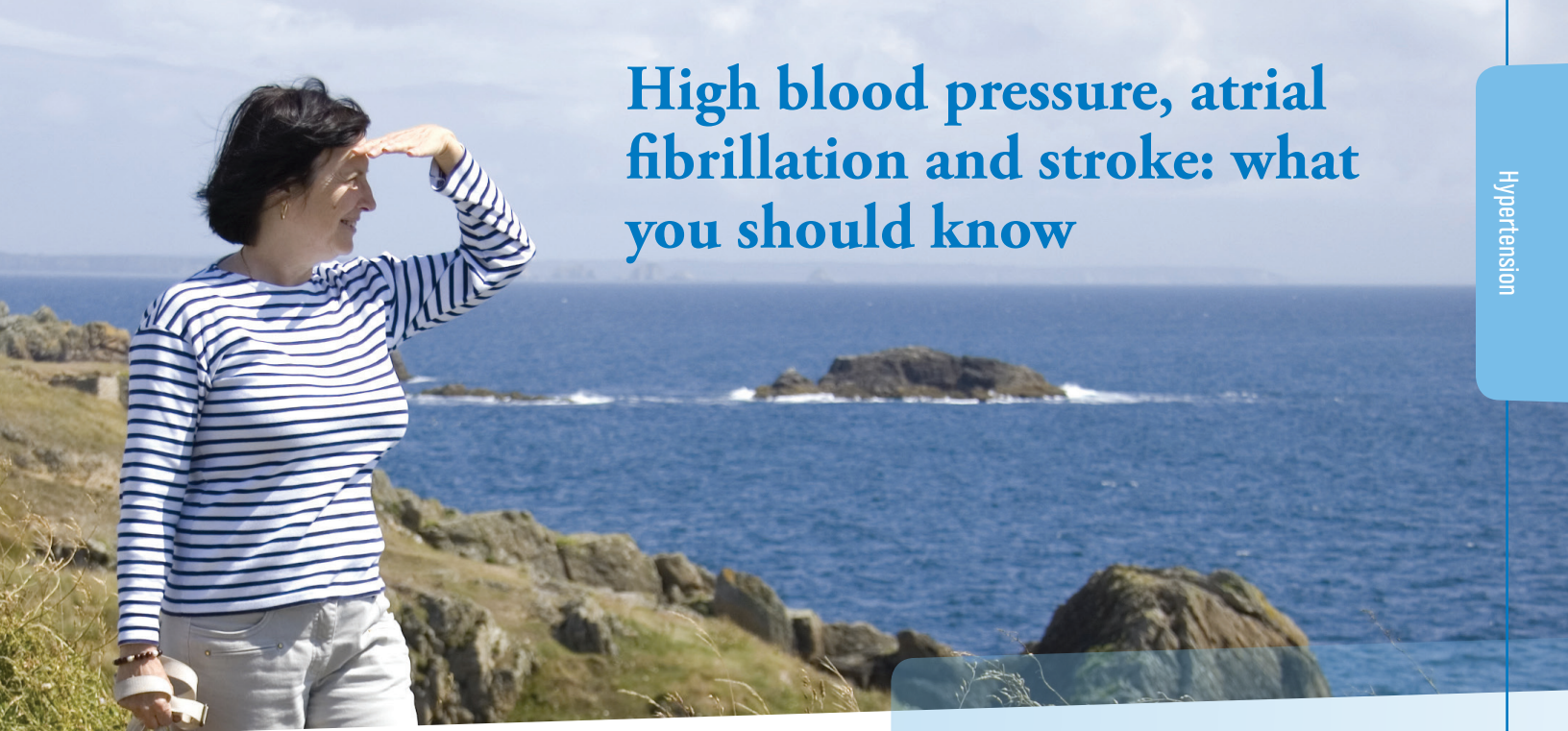


# High blood pressure, atrial fibrillation and stroke: what you should know



Stroke is a leading cause of death in America. It happens when a blood vessel that supplies blood to the brain is blocked or bursts. Nearly 800,000 Americans suffer a stroke each year.

About three out of four people who have a stroke for the first time have high blood pressure. And an irregular atrial heart rhythm — a condition called atrial fibrillation (AFIB) — is present in about one out of five strokes.

High blood pressure is the chief culprit, and AFIB isn't far behind. Yet there's good news — you can easily do something about them. Your best defense is to avoid these heart conditions through a heart-healthy lifestyle.

## The stroke connection

For people with high blood pressure, the force of blood pushing against the arteries as the heart pumps blood is too high. That causes gradual damage to blood vessels, including those to the brain. A weakened blood vessel may rupture, or diseased arteries may become blocked by a clot or plaque buildup.

Then there's AFIB. That's when stroke risk increases because the rapid heartbeat allows blood to pool in the heart, which can cause clots to form and travel to the brain.

**Talk to your doctor about high blood pressure, AFIB and stroke prevention. The more you take control of your blood pressure, the healthier you can be.**

## How to reduce stroke risk

Preventing or controlling high blood pressure and AFIB can greatly lower your chances of having a stroke. Here's how:

- Don't smoke.
- Get regular physical activity.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Limit alcohol to no more than two drinks a day for men or one drink a day for women.
- Eat a healthy diet that is high in fruits, vegetables and whole grains; include low-fat dairy products; and limit salt, saturated fat, trans fat and cholesterol.
- Monitor your blood pressure and work to keep it at your goal.
- Take your medication as prescribed if you have high blood pressure or AFIB.

Source: Adapted from The American Heart Association Website: High Blood Pressure, Afib and Your Risk of Stroke, [www.heart.org](http://www.heart.org), (accessed October 2015).

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