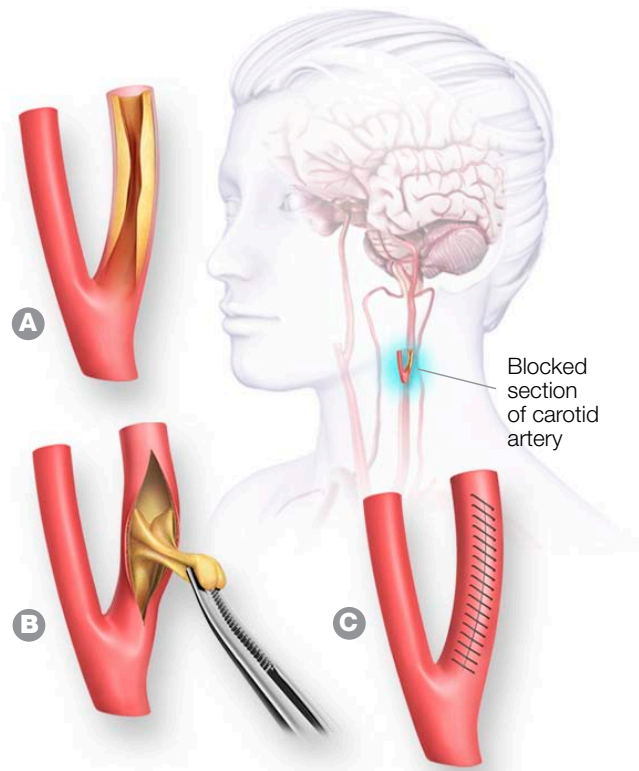




let's talk about

Carotid Endarterectomy

Carotid endarterectomy is a surgery to remove fatty deposits (plaque) that are narrowing the arteries in your neck. These are called the carotid arteries. They supply blood and oxygen to the front part of your brain. If plaque and other fatty materials block an artery, it slows or blocks the blood flow, and you could have a stroke.



- A:** The blocked section of the carotid artery is identified.
B: The artery is opened and the plaque is removed.
C: The cleaned artery is sutured shut.

Why do I need it?

Your doctor has given you one or more tests that show there is blockage of one or both of your carotid arteries. You may have had transient ischemic attacks (TIAs). A TIA is caused by a blood clot that lasts only a few minutes and usually causes no permanent injury. TIAs can serve as warning signs of a major stroke. About 15 percent of these are followed by a stroke in the following year. If you need this operation, it can stop TIAs from reoccurring and can reduce your risk for a stroke.

How is it done?

- You'll get medicine to make you sleep and prevent pain. In some cases the doctors may do this surgery while you are awake.
- The doctor makes a small cut in your neck at the spot where your carotid artery is blocked or narrowed.

- The doctor opens up the narrowed artery and removes the plaque.
- The doctor will make the artery as smooth and clean as possible.
- The artery and the cut will be closed up (sutured).
- The surgery usually takes about one or two hours.

What about afterwards?

- You'll wake up in the hospital and may feel confused at first.
- Your neck may be sore or will hurt for a couple of days.
- You may have a bruise where the surgery was done.
- Your doctor may prescribe medication for control of any pain you might have.
- It may be hard to swallow at first. Your doctor may ask you to eat a soft diet at first and then move you to a normal diet.

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- You'll probably go home in a day or two.
- Your doctor will give you instructions on what you can and cannot do after the surgery. For example, you may be told not to lift anything heavy for a few weeks after the surgery.
- Ask your doctor when you can to return to work.
- Your doctor will prescribe medications to prevent blood clotting such as aspirin, clopidogrel or the combination of aspirin and dipyridamole.
- You should make healthy lifestyle changes to help reduce the chance of new plaque deposits and to lower your risk of stroke.

How can I reduce my risk of stroke?

- Have your blood pressure checked often and manage high blood pressure.
- Don't smoke, and avoid second-hand smoke.
- Reach and maintain a healthy weight.
- Get regular physical activity.
- Have your blood sugar tested, and control diabetes if you have it.

- Eat less salt, saturated fat and *trans* fat.
- Limit alcohol to no more than two drinks a day for men, one drink a day for women.
- Take your medications exactly as prescribed.



Managing your blood pressure is a great way to reduce your risk of stroke.

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1 Call **1-888-4-STROKE** (1-888-478-7653) to learn more about stroke or find local support groups, or visit **StrokeAssociation.org**.
- 2 Sign up to get **Stroke Connection** magazine, a free magazine for stroke survivors and caregivers at **strokeconnection.org**
- 3 Connect with others sharing similar journeys with stroke by joining our Support Network at **strokeassociation.org/supportnetwork**.

Do you have questions for the doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write your questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider.

For example:

Could I have a stroke during surgery?

Will I need a surgery again?

My Questions:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one. Visit **strokeassociation.org/letstalkaboutstroke** to learn more.