

[Carotid artery disease](#) is a form of peripheral artery disease that affects blood flow through the carotid arteries, the two large vessels (one on each side of your neck) that supply blood to the brain. Narrowed carotid arteries put you at risk for stroke, a blockage of blood flow to the brain that can damage brain tissue.

Treatment of carotid artery disease is focused on slowing the progression of the disease and preventing a stroke, and consists of:

- [Healthy lifestyle changes](#)
- **Medication** to control stroke risk factors and prevent a stroke
- [Procedures](#) to clear narrowing or blockages in the carotid arteries

### Lifestyle Changes

All women with carotid artery disease will need to make healthy lifestyle changes to slow the progression of the disease and prevent heart attack and stroke. These include:

- Getting regular exercise (at least 30 minutes a day on most days of the week)
- Eating a [heart-healthy diet](#) low in saturated fat and cholesterol. Eat plenty of whole grains, vegetables, and fruits.
- Maintaining a [healthy weight](#)
- [Quitting smoking](#)

See [Preventing Stroke: The Basics](#) for more on changes you can make to reduce your stroke risk.

### Medication

While lifestyle changes may be enough for some women to get their [stroke risk factors](#) under control, many women will also need medication to reduce their risk of stroke. Medications used

to treat women with carotid artery disease include:

- [Aspirin](#) or other blood thinning drugs to prevent blood clots
- [Blood pressure drugs](#) to lower high blood pressure
- [Statin drugs](#) to lower high cholesterol and prevent heart attack and stroke
- Drugs to control your blood sugar if you have [diabetes](#)

### Procedures to Treat Carotid Artery Disease

If you have severe carotid artery disease, or if you have already had a [stroke](#) or TIA (“mini-stroke”), you may benefit from a procedure to clear your carotid arteries and prevent future strokes. The most common procedures used to treat carotid artery disease are:

#### [Carotid Endarterectomy](#)

Carotid endarterectomy (*en-DART-er-EK-toe-mee*) is a surgical procedure that removes fatty deposits (plaque) from the inside of the carotid arteries. It is the most frequently performed surgery to prevent stroke, and is done in 40,000 women each year. Carotid endarterectomy can prevent a stroke or TIA in women with severe carotid artery disease. See [Should I have a carotid endarterectomy to prevent a stroke?](#) to learn more.

#### [Carotid Stenting](#)

Carotid stenting is a less invasive procedure to prevent stroke in women with carotid artery disease. Like [angioplasty and stenting for coronary artery disease](#), the procedure uses a long, thin tube called a catheter that is inserted through an artery in your groin or arm and guided to the location of the blockage. A tiny wire mesh tube is expanded and left in the artery to prop it open and allow blood to flow freely.

**Learn More:**

- See our [Stroke](#) article to learn more about the consequences of stroke and how it can be prevented
- See [Signs of Stroke](#) to learn how to recognize a stroke in yourself or a loved one
- See [Carotid Artery Disease Diagnosis](#) to learn about tests to diagnose carotid artery disease and when you should have them

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