

# But, I Don't Want to Have a Female Brain Attack

There are no guarantees in life, but you can reduce the chances of having a female brain attack by following this easy four step KCKC plan.



**Know** the *risk factors* that precipitate a brain attack/stroke

**Compare** your *past and present lifestyle habits* against the risk factors

**Know** your *family history* of stroke events

**Consult** with a health professional knowledgeable about brain attacks/strokes *about risk factors that may affect you and what health and lifestyle changes may be appropriate for you.*

## **The Big Five Risk Factors Associated with a Brain Attack/Stroke**

1. History of coronary heart disease/heart attacks
2. High blood pressure
3. High cholesterol
4. Prior mini stroke event
5. Family history of stroke incidents

### **Other related factors**

- Atrial fibrillation (heart rhythm disorder)
- Autoimmune diseases (Diabetes mellitus, Lupus)
- Alcohol abuse
- Illicit drug use (especially, cocaine, amphetamines, heroin)
- Clotting blood disorders

- Sickle cell disease
- Smoking or exposure to second hand smoke
- Poor diet and poor health habits
- Inactive lifestyle
- Increased abdominal fat and conditions of obesity

### **The Big Five Risk Factors for Women**

1. Migraine headaches – especially when accompanied by aura sensations; women who use birth control, smoke and have migraines experience a higher incidence
2. Long term use of hormones – birth control pills for women over age 35 may increase risk; hormone replacement: estrogen or estrogen plus progestin increases risk slightly for postmenopausal women
3. Pregnancy – risk factor increases 2.4 times in the weeks following birth
4. Family history- risk factor doubles for women with immediate family members who have had a stroke
5. Sleep excess -unknown reasons where postmenopausal women who sleep 8-9 hours/night

[source: *5 factors that increase women's stroke risk* by Geri K. Metzger, staff writer, My OptumHealth.com Sept.8, 2009]

**Consult with your health professional for what is right for you, but the following are general health recommendations.**

- Reduce salt and fat in diet
- Have a stress reduction plan
- Increase healthy foods, especially fruits and vegetables
- Exercise
- Stop smoking
- Have a physical examination
- Reevaluate birth control or hormone replacement options

According to Dr. Steven J. Kittner, M.D. director of the Maryland Stroke Center at the University of Maryland School of Medicine, **being able to reduce any one of the risk factors can**

**lower the chances of a brain attack/stroke. However, risk factors become cumulative when no personal action is taken.**

The information provided above is for informational purposes only. Please consult with your health care provider before making any decision or changes.

by Joyce Hansen