

# What is Carotid Endarterectomy?

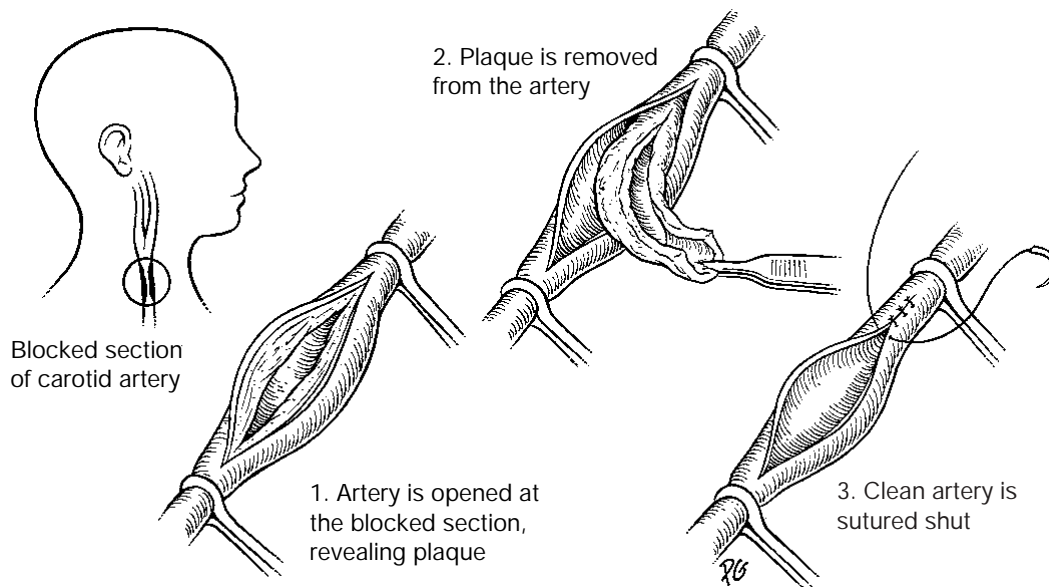
## Why do I need it?

Carotid endarterectomy is surgery that removes harmful plaque from your carotid arteries. These two arteries supply your brain with blood and oxygen. If plaque and other fatty materials block an artery, it stops the blood flow and you could have a stroke.

Your doctor has given you one or more tests that show there is blockage. You may have had transient ischemic attacks (TIAs). These are “minor strokes” that can happen before a major stroke. This operation can stop TIAs from happening and can reduce your risk for stroke.

## How is it done?

- You'll be put to sleep before the surgery.
- A doctor will make a cut in your neck and open the carotid artery.
- Plaque will be taken out.
- The doctor will make the artery as smooth and clean as possible.
- The artery and the cut will be closed up.



## What about afterwards?

- You'll wake up in the hospital and may feel confused at first.
- Your neck will hurt for a couple of days, and it may be hard to swallow at first.
- You'll probably go home in a day or two.
- You shouldn't lift anything heavy for about 3 weeks.
- You'll probably be able to return to work within a month.
- 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 control high blood pressure.
- Don't smoke, and avoid other people's tobacco smoke.
- Take off any extra weight.
- Get regular exercise.
- Have your blood sugar tested, and control diabetes if you have it.
- Eat less salt and saturated fat.
- Limit alcohol to no more than two drinks a day for men, one drink a day for women.

## How can I learn more?

1. Talk to your doctor, nurse or other health-care professionals. If you have heart disease or have had a stroke, members of your family also may be at higher risk. It's very important for them to make changes now to lower their risk.
2. Call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721), or visit [americanheart.org](http://americanheart.org) to learn more about heart disease.
3. For more information on stroke, call 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653) or visit us online at [StrokeAssociation.org](http://StrokeAssociation.org).

We have many other fact sheets and educational booklets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one.

Knowledge is power, so *Learn and Live!*

## What are the Warning Signs of Heart Attack and Stroke?

### Warning Signs of Heart Attack:

Some heart attacks are sudden and intense, but most of them start slowly with mild pain or discomfort with one or more of these symptoms:

- Chest discomfort
- Discomfort in other areas of the upper body
- Shortness of breath with or without chest discomfort
- Other signs including breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness

### Warning Signs of Stroke:

- Sudden weakness or numbness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden, severe headache with no known cause

Learn to recognize a stroke. Time lost is brain lost.

Call 9-1-1... Get to a hospital immediately if you experience signs of a heart attack or stroke!

## Do you have questions or comments for your doctor or nurse?

- Take a few minutes to write your own questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider. For example:

Could I have a stroke during surgery?

Will I need surgery again?