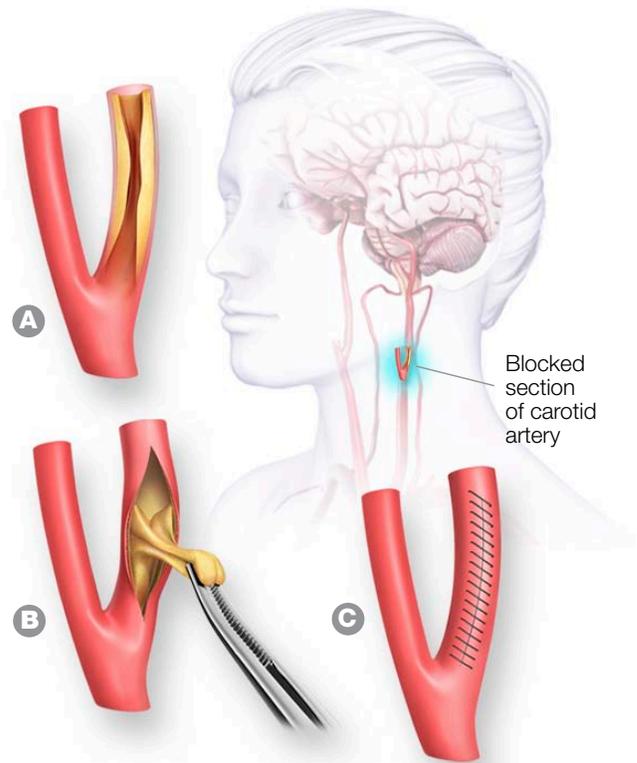




# What Is Carotid Endarterectomy?

Carotid endarterectomy is 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 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. 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 one-third of these are followed by a stroke in the following year. This operation can stop TIAs from happening and can reduce your risk for stroke.

## How is it done?

- You'll get medicine to make you sleep and prevent pain.
- The doctor makes a small cut in your neck at the spot where your 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.
- The surgery usually takes about 1 or 2 hours.

## What about afterwards?

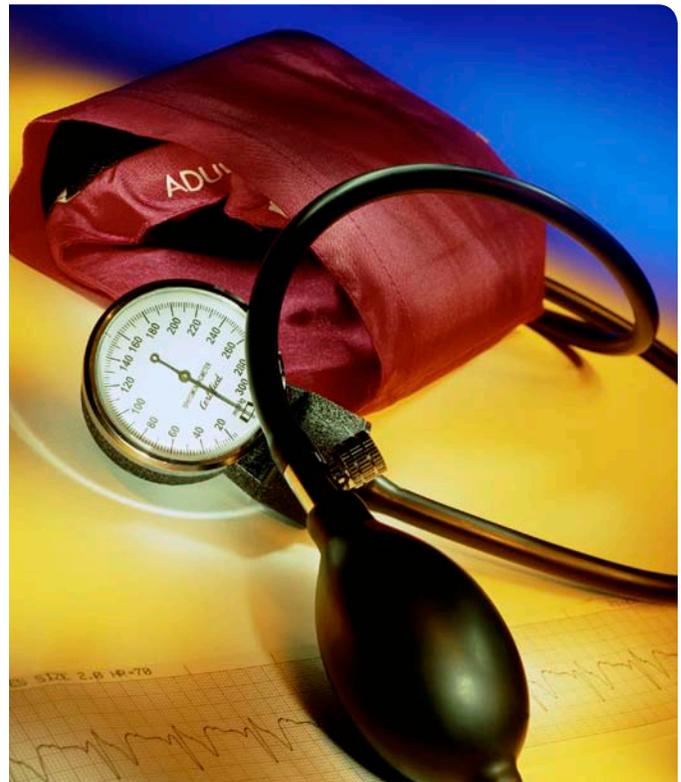
- You'll wake up in the hospital and may feel confused at first.
- Your neck will hurt for a couple of days.
- It may be hard to swallow at first.
- You'll probably go home in a day or two.
- You shouldn't lift anything heavy for about three weeks.
- You'll probably be able to return to work within a month.
- You should make healthy lifestyle changes to help reduce the chance of new plaque deposits and to lower your risk of stroke.

(continued)



### 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 sodium (salt), saturated fat and *trans* fat.
- Limit alcohol to no more than two drinks a day for men, one drink a day for women.



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

### HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1 Call **1-800-AHA-USA1** (1-800-242-8721), or visit **heart.org** to learn more about heart disease and stroke.
- 2 Sign up to get *Heart Insight*, a free magazine for heart patients and their families, at **heartinsight.org**.
- 3 Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at **heart.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 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 **heart.org/answersbyheart** to learn more.