

Handout 2

Stroke risk and protective factors

Risk factors which can't be changed:

- Ageing: everyone's risk of stroke increases with age
- Ethnicity: some minority ethnic groups have increased risk of stroke such as people from the Indian Sub-continent and of Afro Caribbean origin
- Malformation of the blood vessels in the brain – some people are born with these and they can cause a bleed into the brain.

Risk factors which can be changed:

- Cardio-vascular disease: high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart problems (such as irregular heart beat)
- Other health problems such as obesity, type 2 diabetes and stress which are risk factors for cardio-vascular disease and therefore stroke
- Socio-economic factors: people on lower incomes are at greater risk of cardio-vascular disease and therefore stroke, especially under 65
- Problem drug use (especially amphetamines and cocaine)
- Vascular problems following surgery, head injury or injury to the neck and face.

Protective factors for cardio-vascular health which can reduce the risk of cardio-vascular disease and stroke:

- Not smoking
- Drinking alcohol moderately
- Eating healthily
- Regular physical activity
- Good mental health
- An adequate income.