

Carotid Artery Surgery

This surgery is needed when either of the two carotid arteries in the neck becomes severely narrowed. Untreated, this could result in a stroke.

The symptoms of a stroke include numbness or weakness in arms or legs, sudden change or loss of vision in one eye, slurring of speech, or drooping of a part of the face.

Risk factors include smoking, high blood pressure, diabetes, high blood cholesterol, heart disease, and lack of exercise.

A doctor decides on a treatment plan with the help of specialized tests. Treatment may involve surgery or not, depending on symptoms and severity of disease.

Nonsurgical treatment may be in the form of lifestyle changes, blood pressure control, quitting smoking, exercise, managing cholesterol, and healthy eating.

In this surgery (called “carotid endarterectomy”), plaque which has built up in the artery is removed. This reopens the artery to allow blood flow.

In certain high-risk patients, treatment may involve inserting a wire mesh in the artery to keep it open. This is usually done by threading the mesh through an artery in the groin to the blockage. This procedure is called carotid stenting.

Whether or not surgery is done, the patient needs to make healthy lifestyle choices. These choices can reduce the risks of stroke and other diseases.