



# Let's Talk About Carotid Endarterectomy

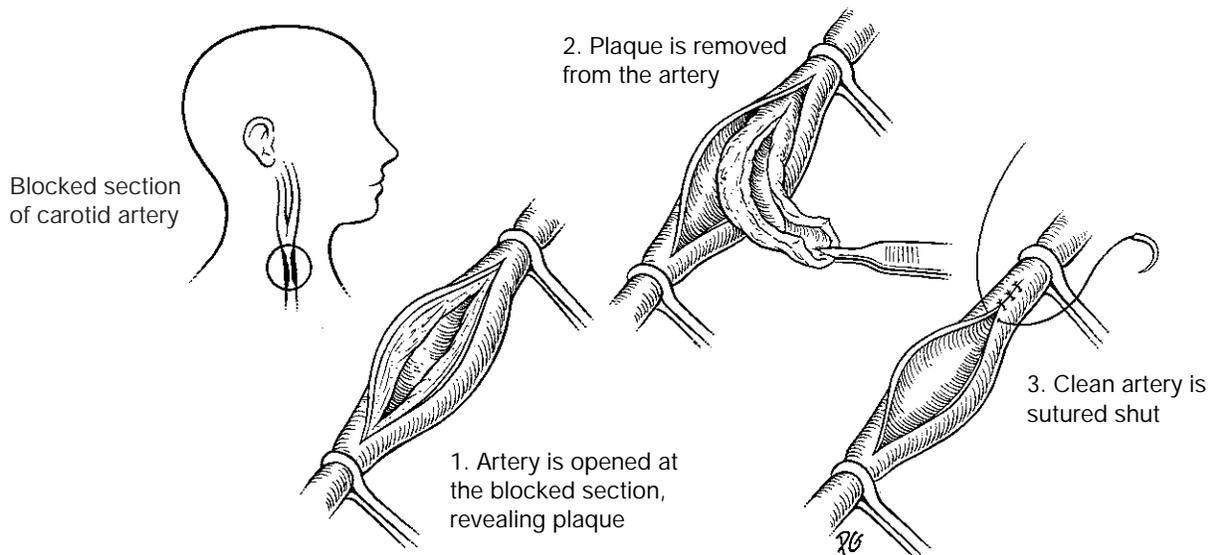
## What is carotid endarterectomy and why do I need it?

Carotid endarterectomy (ka-ROT-id en-dar-ter-EKT-o-mee) is surgery that removes harmful plaque (plak) from your carotid arteries. These two arteries are located in the neck and supply your brain with blood that carries nutrients and oxygen. If plaque obstructs one of these arteries, it reduces the blood flow to the brain, leading to a stroke.

You may have had TIAs (transient ischemic attacks) or other symptoms. TIAs are “mini strokes” that serve as warning signs of a major stroke. Carotid endarterectomy may reduce your risk of a major stroke.

## How is it done?

- You will be put to sleep before the surgery, or a local anesthesia may be used.
- A surgeon 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 happens after surgery?

- You will wake up in the hospital.
- Your neck will hurt for a couple of days, and it may be hard to swallow at first.
- For several months you may have a loss of sensation in the area where you had your surgery. This is a normal reaction to the surgery. In time, feeling will return.

- You'll probably go home in a day or two.
- For about three weeks you should not lift anything heavy.
- For a short time you may be restricted from driving.
- Within a month you may be able to return

to work.

- Your doctor may recommend medication after the procedure.
- You should make healthy lifestyle changes to help reduce the chance of plaque returning and to lower your risk of stroke.

## How can I learn more?

- Talk to your doctor, nurse or other healthcare professionals. Ask about other stroke topics. This is one of many *Let's Talk About Stroke* fact sheets available.
- For more information on stroke, or to receive additional fact sheets, call the American Stroke Association at 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653) or visit us online at [StrokeAssociation.org](http://StrokeAssociation.org).
- If you or someone you know has had a stroke, call the American

Stroke Association's "Warmline" at 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653), and:

- ✓ Speak with other stroke survivors and caregivers, trained to answer your questions and offer support
- ✓ Get information on stroke support groups in your area
- ✓ Sign up to get *Stroke Connection Magazine*, a free publication for stroke survivors and caregivers

## What are the 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 headaches with no known cause**



Learn to recognize a stroke.  
*Because time lost is brain lost.*

Today there are treatments that can reduce the risk of damage from the most common type of stroke, but only if you get help quickly – within 3 hours of your first symptoms.

Call 9-1-1 immediately if you experience these warning signs!

## 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:

Could I have a stroke during surgery?

Is there another kind of treatment for this problem?

What are the risks of having this surgery?

Will I need a surgery again?

What are the risks of not having this surgery?

Is the surgeon experienced in doing this procedure?

*The statistics in this kit were up to date at publication. For the latest statistics, see the Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics Update at [americanheart.org/statistics](http://americanheart.org/statistics).*

*The American Stroke Association is a division of the American Heart Association. Your contributions will support research and educational programs that help reduce disability and death from stroke.*

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