

# Alcohol and Drug Abuse

Alcohol and/or Drug Abuse are significant risk factors for strokes. Alcohol and drug abuse may increase risk of stroke, but also harm other organs in the body such as the heart, kidneys and liver. Common drugs that are known to increase the risk of strokes include: cocaine, amphetamines and heroin.

Below are the ways Alcohol and Drug use affect your body:

## ALCOHOL

Research shows that drinking large amounts of alcohol can greatly increase your risk of having a stroke. Why? Because alcohol contributes to a number of medical conditions that are risk factors for stroke:

### High Blood Pressure

Drinking too much alcohol raises your blood pressure.

### Diabetes

Drinking alcohol affects your insulin and can lead to type 2 diabetes.

### Being Overweight

Alcoholic drinks are high in calories and can cause increase in weight.

### Atrial Fibrillation

Excessive amounts of alcohol can trigger atrial fibrillation which increases your risk of stroke by five times.

### Liver Damage

Too much alcohol can stop the liver from making substances that help your blood to clot. This can increase your risk of having a type of stroke that causes bleeding in the brain.

## DRUG ABUSE

Research shows that drugs such as Cocaine, Heroin and Amphetamines can cause strokes by:

### Increasing Blood Pressure

Drug abuse can dramatically and quickly increase blood pressure and cause bleeding in the brain.

### Direct Effect on Blood Vessels

Drug abuse can cause gradual narrowing or spasms of blood vessels in the brain.

The extra pressure on the blood vessels from drug abuse can cause them to rupture and leak blood into the brain, causing a stroke.

Stimulant street drugs narrow the blood vessels which can cut off blood flow to parts of the brain, causing brain tissue to die, resulting in a stroke.

### Can Directly Affect the Heart

If Cocaine and Heroin are used in its intravenous (IV) form it can increase the risk of serious infections in the heart valves. This type of heart infection, called Endocarditis, is among the many heart conditions that can lead to stroke.