

Carotid Artery Disease

The carotid arteries are located on either side of your neck and carry blood to your brain. The common carotid artery divides into the internal and external carotid arteries in the middle of the neck. The external carotid artery delivers blood to the face and scalp, while the internal carotid artery delivers blood flow to the brain. The area where the internal and external carotid artery divides is particularly prone to develop atherosclerotic plaque (a sticky substance that can build up on artery walls). This plaque narrows the artery and can either completely obstruct flow to the brain or a piece of the plaque can break free and travel to the brain and cause a stroke. The greater the severity of the narrowing, the higher the risk of stroke.

Signs and Symptoms

There are a number of signs and symptoms that can come from carotid artery narrowing, also known as stenosis. They include:

- 1 Numbness/weakness or loss of coordination of an arm and/or leg on one side of the body
- 2 Drooping on one side of the face or mouth
- 3 Change or loss of vision in one eye
- 4 Thick, garbled speech or the inability to speak or understand speech
- 5 Episodes of memory loss
- 6 Loss of consciousness
- 7 Abnormal sound in the carotid artery

Carotid Artery Disease Screening

A stroke results from the disruption of adequate blood flow to the brain. The carotid arteries are the main blood suppliers to the brain. Dangerous plaque build up in these arteries can cause carotid artery disease, the leading cause of stroke. The screening for this is simple, painless and non-invasive.



What Can I Learn From This Test?

A carotid artery screening is done with Doppler color flow ultrasound technology to create images of the carotid arteries and measure blood flow through these vessels. The amount of plaque build up and the speed of the blood flow are reported as one of the following:

- Within normal range
- Mild/moderate risk
- Moderate risk
- Findings of possible significance

How Is the Test Done?

You will be asked to lie on your back on an exam table. After applying gel to your neck, our technologist will move an instrument called a transducer on your neck to create images of the carotid arteries and assess the rate of blood flow within them.

Who Should Have the Test?

Anyone over 50 years of age or over 40 with risk factors for stroke, carotid artery disease or atrial fibrillation (also known as irregular heartbeat) should have this screening.

How Often Should I Get Screened?

This is a personal decision based on your risk factors and previous screening results. Many people have an annual screening as part of their regular healthcare regimen.

How Do I Prepare for the Test?

- Wear a shirt that is open at the collar and short-sleeved.
- Do not wear a turtleneck.

About Your Results

Your screening will be reviewed by one of our board certified physicians and discussed with you the same day of your screening. Your Primary Care Physician will receive a detailed report of your results in the mail.

