Living Health Topic: Stroke

Should you be concerned?
If you have a health condition that impacts your blood flow, you may have an increased stroke risk. These conditions include:
- Hypertension (high blood pressure)
- Coronary artery disease
- Atrial fibrillation
- Diabetes
- Obesity
- High cholesterol

Other factors
Even if you don’t have a chronic health condition, you may be at risk for a stroke, especially if you have a family history of it.

Other risk factors include smoking, stress, eating an unhealthy diet, not getting enough physical activity, using nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (other than aspirin) and using birth control pills.

Identifying a stroke when it happens
If you think you or someone else is having a stroke, immediately call 911. Remembering the word “FAST” can help you identify the symptoms of stroke:

F: Face drooping: Does one side of the face droop, or is it numb? Ask the person to smile. Is the smile uneven?
A: Arm weakness: Is one arm weak or numb? Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?
S: Speech difficulty: Is speech slurred? Is the person unable to speak or hard to understand? See if the person can repeat a simple sentence like, “The sky is blue.”
T: Time to call 911: If someone shows any of these symptoms, even if the symptoms go away, call 911.

Have you had a stroke?
You may be eligible to participate in Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey’s Case Management program. This voluntary program is free and available to all members. To learn more or enroll, call 1-888-621-5894 and select prompt 2.

Sources: American Stroke Association, WebMD