- Stroke / Blood pressure

# Make avoiding stroke your New Year's resolution

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AT this busy time of year, we hear so much about making New Year's resolutions in an effort to improve our health.

Eat better, drink less, exercise more, quit smoking, drink more water.

While these are all important steps in helping reduce your stroke risk, one of the simplest things you can do which could save your life is get your blood pressure checked.

Blood pressure is the single biggest modifiable risk factor for stroke and it can be managed with medication.

High blood pressure damages blood vessel walls and makes them weaker causing a burst blood vessel and a stroke.

Around 4.1 million of us have high blood pressure and many of us don't realise it.

Unfortunately, high blood pressure is a silent killer, it has no symptoms.

The only way to know if it is a health issue for you is by having it checked by your doctor or pharmacist.

You can control your blood pressure by reducing your salt intake and changing your diet and lifestyle, particularly through regular exercise and maintaining a healthy weight.

We often hear stories from survivors of stroke and their carers that stroke changed their family's life over the Christmas period.

Often, they miss the warning signs because they were celebrating or didn't want to be a burden on their family.

But it is always better to be safe rather than sorry. Stroke can change lives in an instant. It attacks the brain - the human control centre – and can strike anyone of any age.

More than 27,400 people had a stroke for the first time in 2023, which equates to one every 19 minutes.

The good news is 80 per cent of strokes can be prevented.

Make having regular blood pressure checks a priority in 2024.

Be aware of your stroke risk and take steps to manage it.

Do it for yourself and do it for your family. If you think you are too young to have a stroke, think again.

One in three people who has a stroke is of working age.

It will only take five minutes, and it could save your life.

Dr Lisa Murphy, chief executive officer – Stroke Foundation