

Young people at higher risk for stroke

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Fifteen percent of the most common type of strokes occur in adolescents and young adults, and more young people are showing risk factors for such strokes, according to a report in the journal *Neurology*.

Neurologist Jose Biller of Loyola University Medical Center is a co-author of the report, a [consensus statement](#) developed by the American Academy of Neurology.

Between 532,000 and 852,000 persons ages 18 to 44 in the United States have had a stroke. U.S. [hospital discharges](#) for stroke among persons ages 15 to 44 increased 23-to-53 percent between 1995-1996 and 2007-2008, depending on age and gender of the group.

"The impact of strokes in this age group is devastating to the adolescent or young adult, their families and society," Biller said.

Biller is a member of an expert panel the American Academy of Neurology convened to develop a consensus report on the recognition, evaluation and management of [ischemic stroke](#) in young adults and adolescents.

About 85 percent of all strokes are ischemic, meaning they are caused by blockages that block blood flow to the brain. And more young people have risk factors for ischemic strokes. Those risks include high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, abnormal [cholesterol levels](#), [congenital heart disease](#) and smoking.

Strokes in young people have a disproportionately large economic impact, because they can disable patients before their most productive years. And while coping with the shock of having a stroke, "younger survivors may be dealing with relationships, careers and raising children – issues that require additional awareness and resources," the consensus report said.

The authors said more emphasis is needed on teaching about stroke in young people and its risk factors and warning signs in school, at the work place and in [primary care physicians'](#) offices and the media. Given the increasing physical, emotional and financial burden strokes cause in young people, "there will need to be greater research into reducing this burden."

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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