

# Risk Factors Specific to Women

- **Oral contraceptives** taken in combination with hypertension, high cholesterol, migraines or smoking, increases the chance of clotting and causing strokes. If planning to take oral contraceptives guidelines suggest screening for hypertension and cholesterol followed by treatment. It goes without saying that smoking must be stopped.
- **Atrial Fibrillation ( AFib)** doesn't always give you symptoms. Women represent 60 percent of AFib patients over age 75. A heart monitor can diagnose it. It is treated with blood thinners.
- **Migraine with Aura**, aura refers to a variety of symptoms blind spots, zigzag patterns, prickly feelings on the skin, flashing lights that occur upto 30 minutes before the onset of headache. Women with this disorder have a stroke four times as often as men. Oral contraceptives in combination with smoking increase the risk seven times as compared to women without these risks.
- **Obesity** affects 35 percent of women as compared to 32 percent in men. Obesity is defined as a body mass index (BMI) of 30 or more. Post menopausal women are more likely to have abdominal obesity, which is associated with diabetes, high cholesterol and cardiovascular disease, thus increasing the risk for stroke.
- **Advancing Age** since women live longer than men. Regular health checkups, screening and treatment of hypertension, AFib, high cholesterol and diabetes is of utmost importance.

**Lifestyle changes such as** regular physical activity, healthy eating choices, following any recommended medication regimen, abstinence from smoking all of which may reduce the risk for stroke.