In spite of the improvements in acute stroke therapy as well as effective secondary prevention measures, stroke remains the most important disease for permanent disability and is the second most frequent cause of death worldwide. The risk factors for stroke are well known and have been subdivided into non-modifiable (e.g., age, sex, genetic predisposition) and modifiable (e.g., hypertension, smoking, diabetes). The INTER-STROKE study shows that 5 risk factors (history of hypertension or blood pressure > 160/90 mm Hg, smoking, waste-to-hip ratio, physical inactivity and diet-risk score account for 83.4% of the stroke risk in the population. This review focusses on recent developments of primary stroke prevention including the importance of blood pressure variability, new data concerning statins and antithrombotics, the therapy for an asymptomatic carotid stenosis as well as the role of non-medical measures in the framework of lifestyle changes.