

Let's Talk About Lifestyle Changes To Prevent Stroke

How can I make my lifestyle healthier?

You can do plenty to get your heart and blood vessels in shape, even if you've had a stroke. Healthier lifestyles play a big part in decreasing disability and death from stroke and heart attack. Here are the steps to take:

- Don't smoke.
- Improve your eating habits.
- Exercise regularly.
- Take your medicine as directed.
- Get your blood pressure checked and control it if it's high.

- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Decrease your stress level.
- Seek emotional support when it's needed.
- Have regular medical checkups.



How do I stop smoking?

- Make an agreement with yourself to quit.
- Ask your healthcare professional for information and programs that may help.
- Fight the urge to smoke by going to smoke-free facilities. Avoid staying around people who smoke.
- Keep busy doing things that make it hard to smoke, like working in the yard.
- Remind yourself that smoking causes many diseases, can harm others and is deadly.
- Ask your family and friends to support you.

How do I change my eating habits?

- Ask your doctor, nurse or a licensed nutritionist for help.
- Be aware of your special needs, especially if you have high blood pressure, high cholesterol or diabetes.
- Avoid foods like egg yolks, fatty meats, butter and cream, which are high in fat and cholesterol.
- Eat moderate amounts of food and cut down on saturated fat, sugar and salt.
- Bake, broil, roast and boil (don't fry foods).
- Avoid most "fast food" and read nutrition labels on packaged meals.
- Limit alcohol to one drink a day.
- Eat more fruit, vegetables, cereals, dried peas and beans, pasta, fish, poultry and lean meats.

What about exercise?

- Check with your doctor before you start.
- Start slowly and build up to at least 30 minutes a session at least three to four times per week.
- Try new ways of exercising — dancing, weight training, warm-water exercise, tai chi or specialized videotapes for home activities.
- Exercise reduces your risk of heart attack and stroke and makes your heart stronger.
- It helps control your weight and blood pressure, helps you relax and can improve your mood.
- Look for even small chances to be more active. Take the stairs instead of an elevator and park farther from your destination.






How can I learn more?

- Talk to your doctor, nurse or other healthcare professionals. Ask about other stroke topics. This is one of many *Let's Talk About Stroke* fact sheets available.
- For more information on stroke, or to receive additional fact sheets, call the American Stroke Association at 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653) or visit us online at StrokeAssociation.org.
- If you or someone you know has had a stroke, call the American

Stroke Association's "Warmline" at 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653), and:

- ✓ Speak with other stroke survivors and caregivers, trained to answer your questions and offer support
- ✓ Get information on stroke support groups in your area
- ✓ Sign up to get *Stroke Connection Magazine*, a free publication for stroke survivors and caregivers

What are the Warning Signs of Stroke?

-  **Sudden weakness or numbness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body**
-  **Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding**
-  **Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes**
-  **Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination**
-  **Sudden, severe headaches with no known cause**



Learn to recognize a stroke.
Because time lost is brain lost.

Today there are treatments that can reduce the risk of damage from the most common type of stroke, but only if you get help quickly — within 3 hours of your first symptoms.

Call 9-1-1 immediately if you experience these warning signs!

Do you have questions for your doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write your own questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider:

What is the most important change I can make?

What programs are available to help me?

What if I go back to bad habits?

What kind of exercise can I do safely?

The statistics in this kit were up to date at publication. For the latest statistics, see the Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics Update at americanheart.org/statistics.

The American Stroke Association is a division of the American Heart Association. Your contributions will support research and educational programs that help reduce disability and death from stroke.

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