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May is National Stroke Awareness Month. Stroke is the third leading cause of death in our country and the number one cause of adult disability. However, 80% of strokes are preventable. A stroke occurs when a blood clot blocks an artery (a blood vessel that carries blood from the heart to the body) or a blood vessel (a tube through which the blood moves through the body) breaks, interrupting blood flow to an area of the brain. When either of these things happen, brain cells begin to die and brain damage occurs. When brain cells die during a stroke, abilities controlled by that area of the brain are lost. These abilities include speech, movement and memory. How a stroke patient is affected depends on where the stroke occurs in the brain and how much the brain is damaged.

What are the warning signs for stroke?

http://www.strokeassociation.org/downloadable/stroke/1115400484814faces_bkmk_bck.pdf

Here are some guidelines on how a stroke can be prevented from the National Stroke Association.

Stroke Prevention Guidelines

1. [Know your blood pressure.](#)
2. [Find out if you have atrial fibrillation.](#)
3. [If you smoke, stop.](#)
4. [If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation.](#)
5. [Find out if you have high cholesterol](#)
6. [If you are diabetic...](#)
7. [Exercise.](#)
8. [Enjoy a lower sodium \(salt\), lower fat diet.](#)
9. [Circulation \(movement of the blood through the heart and blood vessels\) problems.](#)
10. [Know the Symptoms of Stroke.](#)

Several of these relate to day-to-day lifestyle choices such as **healthy eating and staying active**. Eating plenty of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy and lean protein on a consistent basis can help with blood pressure and weight control and maintaining normal blood lipid levels. Eating less nutrient poor and high calorie foods and beverages can help as well. <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=3040349>



A **brain-healthy diet** should include:

- **Five or more daily servings of fruits and vegetables**, which contain nutrients such as potassium, folate and antioxidants that may protect you against stroke.
- **Foods rich in soluble fiber**, such as oatmeal, beans, apples and carrots
- **Foods rich in calcium**, a mineral found to reduce stroke risk
- **Soy products**, such as tofu and soy milk, which can reduce your LDL cholesterol and raise your HDL cholesterol

level.

- **Foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids**, including cold-water fish, such as salmon, mackerel and tuna.

See <http://www.healthyfridge.org/> for additional heart healthy eating suggestions

Heart Healthy Recipes:

http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/other/ktb_recipebk/ktb_recipebk.pdf

<http://www.deliciousdecisions.org/>

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/heart-healthy-recipes/RE00098>



Stay active--walking or doing other physical activity for at least 30 minutes each day can also help lower your risk for a stroke.

Tips for exercise success <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=801>



Quitting smoking can also lower your risk <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=3018961>

Control diabetes--one of the many complications of uncontrolled diabetes is narrowing of the arteries and buildup of fatty deposits. These are the same problems that can lead to stroke. It has also been found that if blood sugars are excessively high when a stroke hits the amount of brain damage is increased. Exercise, proper diet and checking blood sugar daily are imperative.

Blood pressure control plays a key role in stroke prevention. According to recent estimates, about one in three U.S. adults has high blood pressure, but because there are no symptoms, nearly one-third of these people don't know they have it. Uncontrolled high blood pressure can lead to stroke, heart attack, heart failure or kidney failure. This is why high blood pressure is often called the "silent killer." The only way to tell if you have high blood pressure is to have your blood pressure checked. If you know your blood pressure you can use the High Blood Pressure Health Risk Calculator to evaluate your risk and learn how lifestyle changes can lower blood pressure and your health risks

<http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=3027275#>

Enjoy your weekend—eat healthy, be active and be well!

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