



let's talk about

## Lifestyle Changes To Prevent Stroke

You can do plenty to make your heart and blood vessels healthy, even if you've had a stroke. A healthy lifestyle plays a big part in decreasing your risk for disability and death from stroke and heart attack.



### How can I make my lifestyle healthier?

Here are steps to take to be healthier and reduce your risk of stroke:

- Don't smoke and avoid second-hand smoke.
- Improve your eating habits. Eat foods low in saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol, sodium and added sugars.
- Be physically active.
- Take your medicine as directed.
- Get your blood pressure checked regularly and work with your healthcare provider to manage it if it's high.
- Reach and 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 a decision to quit — and commit to stick to it.
- Ask your healthcare provider for information, programs and medications 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 or registered dietician 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, trans fat, sugar and salt.
- Bake, broil, roast and boil foods instead of frying.
- Read nutrition labels on packaged meals. Many are very high in sodium.

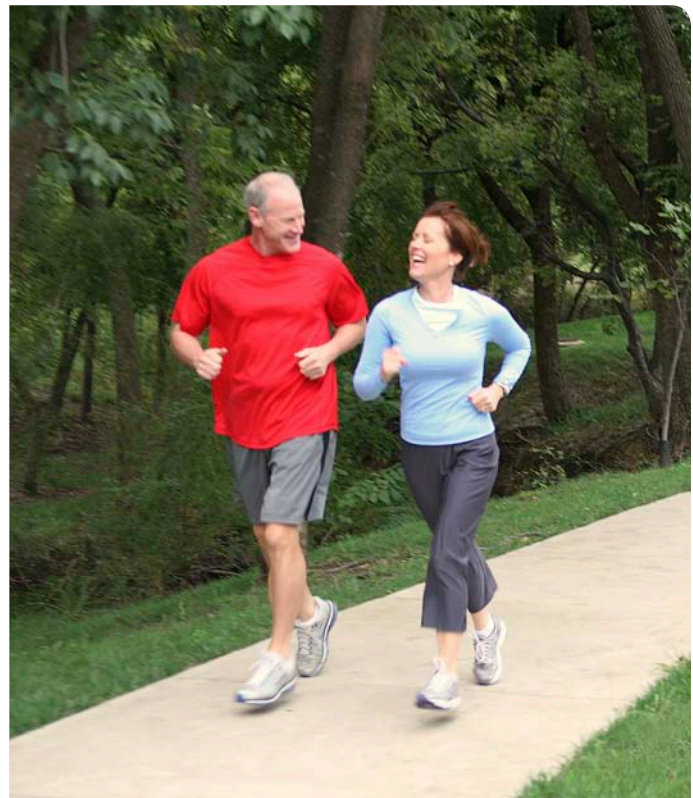
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- Limit alcohol to one drink a day for women; two drinks per day for men.
- Eat more fruit, vegetables, whole-grains, dried peas and beans, pasta, fish, poultry and lean meats.

### What about physical activity?

- If you have a medical condition, check with your doctor before you start.
- Start slowly and build up to at least 2 ½ hours of moderate physical activity (such as brisk walking) a week.
- Look for even small chances to be more active. Take the stairs instead of an elevator and park farther from your destination.



If you have a chronic medical condition, check with your doctor before starting an exercise program.

### HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1** Talk to your doctor, nurse or other healthcare professionals. Ask about other stroke topics.
- 2** Call **1-888-4-STROKE** (1-888-478-7653) or visit us at **StrokeAssociation.org** to learn more about stroke.
- 3** Call the American Stroke Association's "Warmline" at **1-888-4-STROKE** (1-888-478-7653), and:
  - Sign up for *Stroke Connection*, a free magazine for stroke survivors and caregivers.
  - Talk to other stroke survivors and caregivers and find local support groups.

### Do you have questions for the doctor or nurse?

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

For example:

**What is the most important change I can make?**

**What kind of physical activity can I do safely?**

### My Questions:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one. Visit [strokeassociation.org/letstalkaboutstroke](http://strokeassociation.org/letstalkaboutstroke) to learn more.

**Knowledge is power, so Learn and Live!**