Facts You Need to Know About Strokes

By Elissa Goldstein

The onset of a stroke can seem so sudden, but the trouble begins long before the first symptoms. Weakened blood vessels are at the heart of every stroke. A stroke occurs when blood flow to the brain is interrupted due to a burst or blocked blood vessel. If blood flow is stopped for several seconds, brain cells can die resulting in permanent damage. A stroke is typically referred to as a "brain attack."

Stroke is the third leading cause of death in the United States and is the leading cause of aphasia, a communication disorder that is caused by damage to the areas in the brain that control language. Between 20%-40% of people who have a stroke will have aphasia. Aphasia can affect all aspects of language, including speaking, understanding what others say, reading, and writing.

Aphasia does not affect intelligence, but it does affect a person’s ability to communicate with others. It is estimated that 2 million Americans have aphasia. The good news about stroke is that it does take a long time for plaque to clog your vessels; just as it takes a long time for high blood pressure to weaken and damage those vessels. If you are one of the lucky ones who haven’t suffered a stroke yet, it’s time to seriously consider adding stroke-preventing strategies into your lifestyle. But for those of you who have suffered a stroke, read on. Stroke survivors are not only at greater risk of having another one, but recurrent strokes can be more deadly and more debilitating than the first stroke because of the damage created from previous strokes.

Evaluating your current lifestyle and making the appropriate changes now can go a long way toward promoting a healthy brain and body.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
Visit American Heart Association at www.americanheart.org, American Stroke Association at www.strokeassociation.org or The Stroke Network at www.strokenetwork.net. To find out more about aphasia, visit the Adler Aphasia Center website at www.adleraphasiacenter.org.

Stroke Prevention Tips

Educate yourself about stroke symptoms- Symptoms include sudden numbness or weakness of face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body; sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes; sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding; sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination; sudden severe headache with no known cause. Maintain a healthy blood pressure- Know your blood pressure and have it checked at least once a year, if not more. Diet and medication can correct high blood pressure.
More Stroke Prevention Tips

**Limit your alcohol intake**—Drinking one or two glasses of wine, or the alcohol equivalent, each day may actually lower your risk for stroke (provided that there is no other medical reason you should avoid alcohol). Heavy drinking can increase your risk for stroke.

**Stay fit and maintain a healthy weight**—A brisk walk or other activity for as little as 30 minutes a day can improve your health in many ways, and may reduce your risk for stroke. Aerobic exercise is so good for stroke prevention because it stops clots that can cause a stroke by preventing the buildup of plaque in blood vessels. It increases your endurance and strengthens the cardiovascular system.

**Stop smoking**—Smoking doubles the risk for stroke. If you stop smoking today, your risk for stroke will immediately begin to drop.

**Skip foods high in sodium, cholesterol and saturated fats**—By cutting down on sodium, cholesterol and fat in your diet, you may be able to lower your blood pressure, lower your cholesterol level and most importantly, keep those arteries clean, thus lowering your risk for stroke.

**Take charge of your cholesterol levels**—Know your cholesterol number. If it is high, work with your doctor to control it. Lowering your cholesterol may reduce your risk for stroke. Having high cholesterol can indirectly increase stroke risk by putting you at greater risk of heart disease, another stroke risk factor.

**Limit diet soda intake**—Recent studies suggest a connection between drinking diet soda and the risk of stroke and heart attack.

**Know the location of your nearest stroke center**—More than half of Americans don’t know where the closest stroke-certified hospitals are, according to the American Stroke Association. If you are experiencing symptoms but don’t know where the nearest stroke center is in your area, it’s impossible to act quickly.

Are You Packing Safe Lunches?

Did you know that the lunches you pack at home could be increasing your chances of getting sick?

Most brown-baggers don’t have access to a fridge during the day, so their bagged lunch sits unrefrigerated all morning. Perishable foods—such as leftover casserole, a turkey sandwich or cut vegetables—can warm to unsafe temperatures during that time, even if you use an insulated lunch bag or ice packs. Warmer temperatures allow bacteria to breed, which could cause upset stomachs or even foodborne illness.

Heed the following tips to keep unrefrigerated bagged lunches safe during the day:

- If you’re using an insulated lunch bag, put it in the freezer overnight so that it is cooler to start off the morning.
- When using ice packs to cool your lunch, use two and put one on either side of perishable foods. If using a paper bag, double-bag it.
- Swap perishable foods for ones that don’t require refrigeration, such as a peanut butter sandwich instead of deli meat, or an apple in lieu of melon.
- Freeze sandwiches overnight to help them stay cold.
- Foods found on a shelf at the store, such as applesauce or fruit cups, are generally also safe for an un-chilled lunch bag.
- Pack only the amount of food that will be eaten, to avoid leftovers that will be left out unrefrigerated for the rest of the day.
- When preparing lunches, always wash your hands and the counter thoroughly before beginning. Many people forget this step, but it may be the most important for keeping your lunch free of bacteria that can cause illness.

Your Disability Rights

If you have a qualified disability, you have certain rights in the workplace. This means:

- You cannot be discriminated against in any employment practice, including hiring, firing, promotion, compensation, etc.
- You may not be asked if you have a disability
- You may be entitled to special accommodation to your job or work environment if your disability interferes with your ability to do your job

Questions? Contact your supervisor!

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Under federal law, a disability is a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, including seeing, hearing, speaking, walking, breathing, performing manual tasks, learning, caring for oneself and working. For more information on disability rights under federal law, please visit [www.eeoc.gov](http://www.eeoc.gov).
Quick Tips to Trim Your Energy Bill

Energy costs continue to rise, but these simple home tips can help maximize your energy spending:

- Turn off anything you’re not using – lights, computer, television, radio, etc. Unplug appliances and electronics.
- Swap out standard light bulbs for energy-efficient ones.
- In anticipation of winter, weatherize your home. Use caulk or a weather strip to seal any door or window that leaks air.
- Upgrade the insulation in your attic.
- Use the dishwasher, washer and dryer only for a full load.
- Encourage everyone in the house to take shorter showers.
- Regularly change the filter on your air conditioner.
- Repair leaky faucets immediately.
- Keep the thermostat under 70 degrees in winter (and a few degrees cooler than the outside temperature in summer).
- Turn the heat down (or the air conditioning up) when you are at work during the day or gone for other long periods.

Step Your Way to Better Health

Walking more each day can help you lose weight, reduce your risk of disease and improve overall health, but it can be hard to get in the habit. For some extra motivation, buy a pedometer to count your daily steps. Pedometers make it easy to measure and track your progress each day, particularly for those who struggle to regularly set aside blocks of time for walking.

Start by tracking your steps during a normal day, and set goals to increase your steps each week. Experts recommend striving toward 6,000 to 10,000 steps each day for maximum health benefits. That may sound like a lot, but you don’t have to do it all at once! Here are some tips to increase your daily steps:

- Park farther away in parking lots, or a couple blocks from your destination. On a bus or train, get off a stop early.
- Walk around the house while on the phone.
- Take a 10-20 minute walk each day after lunch.
- Always take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Get up and walk around during television commercial breaks.
- Plan activities around walking. Suggest taking a walk with a friend instead of your typical coffee meeting. Take your children, nieces or nephews to the zoo, museum or park.
- Walk while listening to a podcast or audio book – or your favorite music.
- Walk around the mall if the weather is bad. And leave your wallet at home to resist spending temptations!
- Find a walking buddy and hold each other accountable for scheduled walks.

Banana Nut Bread

This simple, nutritious fall treat is courtesy of www.smallstep.gov.

1 cup mashed ripe banana
1/3 cup low-fat buttermilk
1/2 cup packed brown sugar
1/4 cup margarine
1 egg
1 cup sifted all-purpose flour
1 tsp. baking powder
1/2 tsp. baking soda
1/2 tsp. salt
1/2 cup chopped pecans

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Lightly oil 9x5-inch loaf pan. Stir together bananas and buttermilk; set aside. Cream brown sugar and margarine together. Beat in egg. Add banana mixture; beat well. Sift together flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt; add to liquid ingredients and stir until well blended. Stir in nuts. Pour into pan. Bake for 50-55 minutes or until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool for five minutes in pan. Remove from pan and complete cooling on wire rack before slicing.

Serving size = 1/2-inch slice (133 calories each).