

Diet

- Eat more foods from plants, such as vegetables and beans, whole grains, and nuts.
- Eat more fish and seafood in place of red meat, poultry, and eggs.
- Limit the intake of sodium, solid fats, added sugars, and refined grains.
- Reduce calories you eat and drink and increase calories you burn through physical activity.

Excess weight puts a strain on the entire circulatory system. It can also make people more likely to have high cholesterol, high blood pressure and diabetes, all of which can increase stroke risk.

Physical Activity

Physical activity includes anything that gets your body moving. A recent study showed that people who exercise five or more times per week have a reduced stroke risk. You could do any of the following to promote physical activity in your life:

- **Moderate Activity.** 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity per week (brisk walking, water aerobics, bicycling) and 2 or more days a week of weight training exercises.

- **Vigorous Activity.** Or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity activity per week (jogging, running, swimming laps) and 2 or more days a week of weight training exercises.
- **Break it up.** If you can't fit a 30-minute activity in one time, break it up into 10-minute segments. Remember that all physical activity counts.
- **Make physical activity fun.** Walk or bike with a friend, take a dance class, and try different times of the day.

Regular physical activity will improve your overall health and fitness, and reduce your risk for chronic diseases.

Smoking

Smoking doubles the risk of stroke when compared to a nonsmoker. Smoking increases clot formation, thickens blood, and increases the amount of plaque buildup in the arteries. If you smoke, try as hard as possible to stop. Ask your doctor about quit-smoking aids like nicotine patches, counseling, and programs that are available to you. Quitting smoking can be difficult, so don't give up if you are not successful the first time you try.

Alcohol

Alcohol use has been linked to stroke in many studies. Drinking too much alcohol can increase blood pressure and the risk of stroke. Aim to drink in moderation - no more than two drinks a day for men and one drink a day for women.

One drink is equal to:

- 12 ounces of beer
- 5 ounces of wine (1 glass)
- 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ to 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ ounces of liquor