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## LIFESTYLE CHOICES TO PREVENT STROKE

The NIH National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke reports that 80 percent of strokes are preventable, but what does that mean in terms of your daily life?

Taking actions to control your risk factors can help prevent or delay a stroke. If you've already had a stroke, these actions can help prevent another stroke. Let's look at some of the lifestyle changes you might consider.

**DON'T SMOKE.** Cigarette smoking is the most powerful risk factor for stroke. Smoking weakens the walls of your blood vessels. It also makes your blood thicker and more likely to clot. Nicotine raises blood pressure. Carbon monoxide in the smoke lowers the amount of oxygen your blood carries to your brain. If you smoke, try as hard as possible to stop. Ask your doctor about quit-smoking aids. Quitting smoking is difficult. Don't give up if you are not successful the first time you try.

**BE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE.** Remember, anything that gets you moving counts! A recent study showed that people who exercise five or more times per week have a reduced stroke risk. The CDC's guidelines recommend:

- **Moderate activity.** 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity per week (brisk walking, water aerobics, bicycling) and 2 or more days a week of muscle-strengthening activities. OR
- **Vigorous activity.** 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity activity per week (jogging, running, swimming laps) and 2 or more days a week of muscle-strengthening activities.
- **Make physical activity fun.** Walk or bike with a friend, take a dance class or rent a canoe. Pick an activity you enjoy.

**MAINTAIN A HEALTHY WEIGHT.** Excess weight puts a strain on your whole circulatory system. It can also lead to high cholesterol, high blood pressure and diabetes, all of which increase stroke risk.

### EAT A HEART-HEALTHY DIET SUCH AS THE DASH DIET.

The DASH diet ([dashdiet.org](http://dashdiet.org)) was created to help lower blood pressure and support heart health. But it's proven to be effective for weight loss and managing diabetes as well. The diet emphasizes vegetables, fruits and low-fat dairy, with a moderate sodium intake.

## QUICKTAKES



### THE STROKE DANGER

There are many stroke risk factors. Some of them cannot be controlled.

- The biggest risk factor that you cannot control is age. Your chance of having a stroke doubles every 10 years after the age of 55.
- Your stroke risk is greater if a parent, grandparent or sibling has had a stroke. Some strokes can be symptoms of genetic disorders.
- Race can be a risk factor. African Americans have a higher risk of dying from a stroke than whites.
- Some strokes are caused by an arteriovenous malformation or AVM. This is a tangle of abnormal blood vessels in the brain. AVMs are rare and their cause is unclear.

**LIMIT ALCOHOL.** Alcohol use has been linked to stroke in many studies. Drinking too much alcohol can increase blood pressure, and high blood pressure increases the risk of stroke. If you drink, aim for moderation — no more than two drinks a day for men and one drink a day for women. One drink is equal to:

- 12 ounces beer
- 5 ounces wine (1 glass)
- 1 ¼ to 1 ½ ounces liquor

**CONTROL YOUR TEMPER.** People with short tempers have more thickening of the neck arteries, which increases the risk of a stroke. If you have trouble controlling your anger, talk to your doctor about how to handle it.

**DON'T SKIP CHOLESTEROL OR BLOOD PRESSURE MEDICATIONS.** A 2015 study found that fatal strokes are seven times more likely if these heart drugs are not taken as prescribed.

**TREAT ATRIAL FIBRILLATION IF YOU HAVE IT.** Atrial fibrillation, often called AFib, is a type of irregular heartbeat. In AFib, blood can pool in the heart's upper chambers or atria and form a blood clot. The clot could travel to your brain and cause a stroke. AFib is usually managed with drugs.

**KEEP BLOOD SUGAR WELL CONTROLLED.** In terms of stroke and heart disease, having diabetes is the equivalent of aging 15 years. The disease causes destructive changes in the blood vessels throughout your body, including the brain. Also, if blood sugar levels are high at the time of a stroke, brain damage can be more severe than when blood sugar is well controlled.

<http://www.stroke.org/understand-stroke/preventing-stroke/afib-stroke-connection>  
[http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/stroke/detail\\_stroke.htm#1105\\_17](http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/stroke/detail_stroke.htm#1105_17)

If you've previously had a stroke or a TIA (transient ischemic attack or warning stroke), your risk of having another stroke is many times greater than someone who has never had one. If you have had a stroke in the past, it's important to reduce your risk of a second stroke. Your brain helps you recover from a stroke by asking the unaffected brain regions to do double duty. That means a second stroke can be twice as bad.

## STRAWBERRY-LEMON PARFAITS MAKES 4 SERVINGS

Strawberry season is in full swing across much of the country. Make the most of it and visit a U-pick berry farm. It's a win-win activity for stroke prevention. Picking berries counts toward your physical activity total.

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups (16 oz/500 g) fat-free Greek yogurt
- 1 teaspoon fresh-grated lemon zest
- 2 tablespoons fresh-squeezed lemon juice
- 1 1/2 tablespoons sugar or maple syrup
- 3 1/2 cups (16 oz/500 g) strawberries, hulled and sliced

### DIRECTIONS

1. In a bowl, blend yogurt, lemon zest, lemon juice and sugar or maple syrup.
2. Spoon yogurt mixture alternating with sliced strawberries into 4 tall parfait glasses. Chill before serving.



### NUTRITIONAL INFO PER SERVING

150 Calories  
 0g Fat  
 0g Saturated fat  
 6g Protein  
 33g Carbohydrate  
 7g Fiber  
 68mg Sodium  
 196mg Calcium  
 Source: Healthy Living Kitchens