

Top Ten Health Tips to Prevent a Stroke



1. Eat more fruit and vegetables:

- They are packed full of vitamins, minerals and fibre which are essential to good health
- Fruit and vegetables can improve your blood pressure, cholesterol levels and bowel health
- Aim to eat 5 – 7 portions per day, small portions of fruit spread over the day, and larger portions of vegetables and salad

2. Include more oats and pulse vegetables in your diet:

- Like fruits and vegetables, oats and pulses are beneficial in helping to prevent strokes and heart attacks
- They contain soluble fibre which can help improve cholesterol levels as well as bowel health
- Aim to eat oats daily and a variety of beans or lentils three to four times per week

3. Eat a healthy balanced diet:

- Use the food pyramid to help guide you to how many portions of food you should have from each group each day
- Aim to eat a wide variety of healthy foods each day to give you a good mix of nutrients to keep your body healthy

- Include plenty of fruit, vegetables, salads, wholegrains, and pulses and smaller amounts of low fat dairy products and lean proteins

4. Eat more oily fish:

- Eat oily fish such as sardines, mackerel, salmon, trout at least twice per week
- These oily fish contain healthy fats called omega 3 fatty acids
- Omega 3 fatty acids can help improve circulation, reduce blood clots and lower your triglyceride levels (a type of fat in your blood)

5. Include small amounts of unsaturated fat in your diet:

- Unsaturated fats are mostly found in non animal foods such as vegetable oils, nuts and seeds, avocados but also in oily fish
- Include small amounts of unsaturated fats in your diet each day such as rapeseed oil or olive oil, unsalted nuts and seeds as they help cholesterol levels
- See the food pyramid for more information on recommended portion size to include in your diet

6. Cut down on saturated fat:

- Saturated fats mostly come from animal foods such as butter, cream, lard, cheese, fatty meats, chicken skin and foods made with butter and cream such as biscuits, cakes, and many desserts
- Saturated fats can increase your cholesterol levels and increase your risk of having a stroke or a heart attack

- Cut down by choosing leaner meats, cutting the fat and skin off meat and chicken before cooking, using low fat dairy products and spreads, and avoiding processed foods, ready meals and takeaways or eating out.

7. Avoid salt:

- Too much salt can increase your blood pressure level, which increases your risk of stroke.
- Avoid adding salt to your food, instead use herbs, spices, garlic and pepper to add flavour.
- Avoid eating salty foods such as crisps, salted nuts, salted popcorn, processed foods, ready meals and takeaways or eating out.

8. Drink less alcohol:

- If you have already had a stroke or heart attack, you might be advised to avoid alcohol altogether due to the medications you are on
- Always ask your doctor and nurse specialist if it is safe for you to drink alcohol
- If it is safe for you to drink, drink moderate amounts and keep it to 1 – 2 days per week, a maximum of 11 units per week for women, and 17 for men.

9. Manage your weight:

- Being overweight increases your risk of high blood pressure and diabetes, which in turn increases your risk of having a stroke or heart attack.

- Even losing a small amount of weight can help lower your blood pressure, and your blood sugar levels if you have diabetes.
- Aim for a slow gradual healthy weight loss of one to two pounds per week by cutting down on your portion size, following all the healthy eating advice above, cutting down on foods and drinks high in sugar and increasing your physical activity levels

10. Keep Active!

- Keeping active can help maintain your weight and improve your cholesterol and blood pressure levels
- Aim to work towards 30 minutes of physical activity at least 5 days a week
- Increase this up as advised by your physiotherapist to your own recommended level.

Stroke Rehab *and Me*

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