



# Let's Talk About Lifestyle Changes To Prevent Stroke

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## How can I make my lifestyle healthier?

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 disability and death from stroke and heart attack. Here are the steps to take:

- Don't smoke.
  - Improve your eating habits.
  - Be physically active.
  - Take your medicine as directed.
  - Get your blood pressure checked and control 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.



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## How do I stop smoking?

- Make a decision to quit — and commit to stick to it.
  - Ask your healthcare professional for information and programs 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.

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## How do I change my eating habits?

- Ask your doctor, nurse or a licensed nutritionist 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, sugar and salt.
  - Bake, broil, roast and boil (don't fry) foods.
  - Avoid most "fast food" and read nutrition labels on packaged meals.
  - Limit alcohol to one drink a day.
  - Eat more fruit, vegetables, cereals, dried peas and beans, pasta, fish, poultry and lean meats.

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## What about physical activity?

- Check with your doctor before you start.
- Start slowly and build up to at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity a session five or more days a week.
- Try new types of physical activity for home activities — dancing, weight training, warm-water exercise, tai chi or specialized videotapes.
- Physical activity reduces your risk of heart attack and stroke and makes your heart stronger.
- It helps control your weight and blood pressure, helps you relax and can improve your mood.
- Look for even small chances to be more active. Take the stairs instead of an elevator and park farther from your destination.

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## How can I learn more?

- Talk to your doctor, nurse or other healthcare professionals. Ask about other stroke topics. This is one of many *Let's Talk About Stroke* fact sheets.
- For more information about stroke, or to get more fact sheets, call the American Stroke Association at 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653) or visit us online at [StrokeAssociation.org](http://StrokeAssociation.org).
- If you or someone you know has had a stroke, call the American Stroke Association's "Warmline" at 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653) and:
  - ✓ Speak with other stroke survivors and caregivers trained to answer your questions and offer support.
  - ✓ Get information on stroke support groups in your area.
  - ✓ Sign up to get *Stroke Connection*, a free magazine for stroke survivors and caregivers.

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

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

What is the most important change I can make?

What kind of physical activity can I do safely?

What if I go back to bad habits?