



Preventing the Risk of Stroke

May is National Stroke Awareness Month, and this nationwide health observation deserves due consideration as one of the most common health risks with today's increasingly larger food servings and sedentary lifestyle – at all ages. As the third leading cause of death in the United States, it is also a leading cause of long-term disability. Although most strokes occur in people aged 65 years or older, strokes can occur at any age. In fact, nearly 25% of strokes occur in people younger than age 65.

Causes

A stroke is the result of a blood clot, or ruptured artery or blood vessel interrupting the blood flow to an area of the brain. A lack of oxygen and glucose flowing to the brain leads to the death of brain cells and brain damage, which often causes impairments in speech, movement, and memory. Smaller strokes (or silent strokes) can go undetected and may not cause any symptoms, but can however still damage brain tissue.

Warning Signs

Any of the following symptoms should be taken seriously. The American Stroke Association lists the following five signs of stroke:

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm, or leg, especially on one side of the body.
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding.
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes.
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, or loss of balance and coordination.
- Sudden, severe headache with no known cause.

Prevention

Five things to avoid your risk of stroke include:

1. Smoking. Find help to quit.
2. Drinking alcohol excessively (more than two drinks per day on average for men or more than one drink per day on average for women).
3. High fat and sodium diet.
4. A sedentary lifestyle with little exercise.
5. High blood pressure.

Seven healthy habits to keep for lowering your risk of stroke include:

1. Eating a healthy diet with plenty of fresh organic vegetables, fruit and whole grain.
2. Lowering cholesterol, sodium and fat consumption.
3. Exercise! Studies show the risk is lowered by just a moderate level of aerobic fitness.
4. Maintain a healthy weight and low blood pressure.
5. Stay well hydrated with good clean drinking water.
6. Managing stress naturally, without drugs.
7. Drink green or black tea instead of coffee. Research shows that drinking three or more cups of tea per day can reduce the risk of stroke by as much as 21%.

Ask your Doctor or Physical Therapist for information to support your specific needs around an active lifestyle for your age. You will have a natural prescription to lowering your risk of stroke.

This article is written by Philips LIFELINE, the largest Personal Emergency Response Service program in Western Pa. This program delivers extraordinary service to nine counties and offers the cutting-edge **Auto Alert** -- which automatically detects falls, provides peace of mind and assists people with living independently longer. Contact Bob Gordon at 412-779-0696 or Toll Free 866-677-7795.