

Stroke Awareness and Prevention

Strokes can affect people of all ages and backgrounds. Learn how to lower your risk.

Many people have the misconception that stroke is a condition that only affects older adults. However, strokes can and do occur in people of all ages. In fact, nearly a quarter of all strokes occur in people younger than the age of 65.

A stroke is a medical emergency that occurs when something blocks the flow of blood to the brain or when a blood vessel in or near the brain bursts, causing bleeding that damages brain tissue.

Lower Your Risk

Family history, age, sex, and race/ethnicity can all play a role in your risk for stroke. However, there are a number of things you can do to lower your chances of having a stroke:

1. **Don't smoke.** Smoking (along with exposure to secondhand smoke) can thicken your blood and make it more likely to clot. This can lead to increased plaque buildup in your arteries, including the blood vessels leading to the brain.
2. **Keep your blood pressure under control.** Eating a nutritious diet (low in salt and rich in vegetables, fruits, and low-fat dairy products), exercising, and taking blood pressure medication, if needed, are all good ways to control your blood pressure.
3. **Manage your cholesterol.** Get your cholesterol checked regularly, and manage it with diet/physical activity and, if needed, medication.
4. **Maintain a healthy weight.** Maintain a healthy weight by eating a nutritious diet and exercising on a regular basis.

5. **Prevent or control diabetes.** Prevent or control diabetes by eating a nutritious diet, exercising on a regular basis, maintaining a healthy weight and control blood sugar with medication, if needed.

Talk to your doctor and discuss which of these strategies may work best for you.

6. **Limit your alcohol intake.** This means two drinks or less per day for men, and one drink or less per day for women.

Recognize the Signs

Quick medical attention is vital to surviving and recovering from a stroke. If you or someone you know exhibits the following signs or symptoms, think "**FAST.**"

"F.A.S.T." stands for:

Face drooping – Does one side of the face droop, or is it numb?

Arm weakness – Is one arm numb or weak?

Speech difficulty – Is speech slurred, or is there difficulty speaking?

Time to call 911 – If any of these symptoms are present, call 9-1-1 immediately.

The symptoms for a stroke come on suddenly and are not easily explained by other causes. Treatment is effective when it's given quickly. Every minute counts! □



Stronger, Better Defined Arms

Sculpt impressive arms and shoulders with these simple exercises.

What You'll Need: A pair of 3-to 5-pound and 8-to 10-pound dumbbells, a mat or carpeted space, and a stability ball.

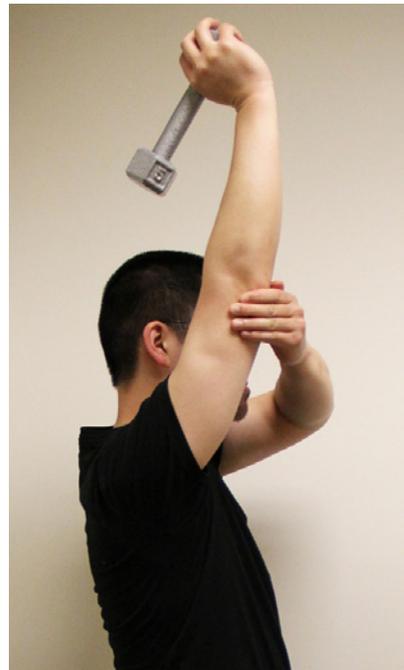
How to Do It: Perform this routine 2 or 3 times a week on nonconsecutive days. Begin with a 5-minute dynamic warm-up: March in place while scissoring arms overhead (like jumping jacks). For each exercise below, do 2 sets of 10 to 12 repetitions (or 10 on each side, if appropriate). Rest 30 seconds between sets.



The "Sit-Up" Pullover

Lie face-up on the floor with your knees bent, feet flat, and arms extended overhead with a dumbbell in each hand.

Contract your abdominals and slowly curl up while lifting your head, shoulders, and back off the floor. Simultaneously bring your arms forward in an arc towards your knees. Hold this position for a second, then slowly return to the starting position.



Overhead Triceps Extension

Stand with your feet hip-width apart.

Hold a dumbbell in your right hand, with your arm extended straight overhead and your left hand supporting your right elbow to prevent it from flaring out.

Bend your elbow and lower the dumbbell behind your head, then press back up to the starting position.

Repeat on the opposite side before moving on to the next exercise.



Single Arm Lateral Raise

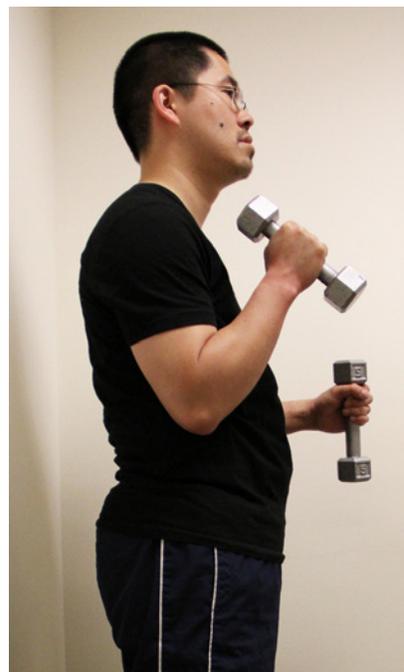
Get into a table position on your knees.

Put your right hand directly beneath your right shoulder and hold a dumbbell in your left hand.

Tighten your abdominals to stabilize your torso, then raise your left arm straight out to the side, keeping it parallel to the floor.

Hold for a second, then slowly lower your arm to the starting position.

Repeat on the opposite side.



Hammer Curls (Biceps)

Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart.

Keep your arms at your sides, palms facing in, with a dumbbell in each hand.

Bend your left arm to a 90 degree angle while holding the dumbbell vertically. Hold this position as you bend your right arm and curl the dumbbell to your shoulder, keeping your elbow in to your side.

Repeat on the opposite side.

Tips for Meatless Mondays

Did you know that “**Meatless Mondays**” originated back during World War I? Along with “**Wheatless Wednesdays**,” these observances were a strategy to encourage people to lower their consumption of important dietary staples that were in short supply because of the war.

In recent years, Meatless Monday has made a bit of a comeback, but for a different reason. Studies show that reducing a person’s meat intake can help reduce their risk of heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and obesity.

Are you ready to give it a try? If so, you should know that there are a lot of foods that can be substituted for that quarter of the plate that the USDA recommends for protein. (The USDA’s **ChooseMyPlate.gov** recommends that half of your plate at any meal contain fruits and vegetables, while the other half should contain protein and grains.)

Some meatless protein sources include:

- Soy products (tofu, soy burgers, soy sausages, etc.)
- Legumes (garbanzos, soybeans, peas, lentils, black beans, peanuts, etc.)
- Nuts and seeds (tree nuts, like walnuts, almonds, hazelnuts, etc., and seeds, like sunflower and pumpkin seeds, for example). A serving is about a handful, so consider these more as toppings that can kick-up the protein in other dishes

- Dairy products (milk, cheese, etc.)*
- Eggs*

*Some vegetarians will eat dairy products (lacto-vegetarians); others may also eat eggs (lacto-ovo vegetarians). Some cultures don’t consider eggs to be vegetarian and some people only eat a plant-based diet (vegans). Before you prepare any dishes, you may want to inquire with your guests about any dietary restrictions they may have.

Many traditional dishes can be made without meat. Here are a couple of ideas to get you started:

- Lasagna can be made with extra vegetables and soy Italian sausage.
- Vegetarian pizzas can be made with an assortment of vegetables to give them color and flavor.

- Enchiladas can be stuffed with vegetables and tofu.
- On the quicker side, you can grill some tofu burgers or make wraps with vegetables and hummus, which is easy to find and already prepared.

A meatless meal can be an easy way to have a healthy meal. Vegetarian meals tend to be lower in fat, higher in fiber, and have more fruits and vegetables. Going meatless for one day a week is a great way to explore this type of diet and get the benefits.

The thing to do is to be creative and have fun. And, with the Internet, a good vegetarian recipe is just a click away. □



Be Yourself: Don't Be Swayed by Peer Pressure

“Do one thing every day that scares you.” — Eleanor Roosevelt

Former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt's suggestion can be a challenging one for most people. But you don't have to dive off a high board or walk on a tightrope to meet it. One of the bravest acts of your day might be to stick up for yourself, or to go against the wishes of your peers when you don't agree with them.

The words “peer pressure” are often associated with teenagers and early adolescents. However, adults are not immune to this type of pressure. The desire to be accepted by your peer group can be strong, even in adulthood.

Peer pressure can be either good or bad. Sometimes our desire to be accepted by our peer group can inspire us to live up to our highest standards or help us be a better team player. Other times, it gets in the way of our natural decision-making process.

Regardless of the peer pressure you may face, it is important that you never lose your sense of self or do something that goes against your basic principles. For example, you shouldn't feel you have to laugh at a joke that you might otherwise find inappropriate or have another drink when you feel you'd had enough for the night.

You should not have to sacrifice who you are just to fit into a group. And, as in your teenage years, if you feel like you're doing something against your principles just to fit in, you may need to find a group of friends who are more compatible with who you are now.

Some tips for being on the right side of peer pressure include:

Always be aware of your reason for doing what you're doing –

Is peer pressure playing a bigger part in your decision-making process than you realize?

Remember your value – be aware of your value independent of your peer group

Be conscious of times you're not yourself – are you doing something out of character just so you will be accepted?

Be aware of times when you feel dishonest – Are you not speaking your truth to fit in?

As Ralph Waldo Emerson once advised: “Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string.”

Only you can make the decisions that are right for you. Don't allow yourself to be swayed by negative peer pressure. ☐

