let’s talk about
Lifestyle Changes To Prevent Stroke

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 your risk for disability and death from stroke and heart attack.

How can I make my lifestyle healthier?
Here are steps to take to be healthier and reduce your risk of stroke:

• Don’t smoke and avoid second-hand smoke.
• Improve your eating habits. Eat foods low in saturated fat, \textit{trans} fat, sodium and added sugars.
• Be physically active.
• Take your medicine as directed.
• Get your blood pressure checked regularly and work with your healthcare provider to manage 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.

How do I change my eating habits?

• Ask your healthcare provider for information, programs and medications 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.

How do I change my eating habits?

• Ask your doctor, nurse or a licensed nutritionist or registered dietician for help.
• Be aware of your special needs, especially if you have high blood pressure, high cholesterol or diabetes.
• Avoid foods like fatty meats, butter and cream, which are high in saturated fat.
• Eat moderate amounts of food and cut down on saturated fat, \textit{trans} fat, sugar and salt.
• Bake, broil, roast and boil foods instead of frying.

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• Read nutrition labels on packaged meals. Many are very high in sodium.
• Limit alcohol to one drink a day for women; two drinks per day for men.
• Eat more fruit, vegetables, whole-grains, dried peas and beans, pasta, fish, poultry and lean meats.

**What about physical activity?**
• If you have a chronic medical condition, check with your doctor before you start.
• Start slowly and build up to at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity (such as brisk walking) a week. Or, you can do 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity physical activity, or a combination of the two, to improve overall cardiovascular health.
• Look for even small chances to be more active. Take the stairs instead of an elevator and park farther from your destination.

**HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?**
1. Call 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653) to learn more about stroke or find local support groups, or visit StrokeAssociation.org.
2. Sign up to get Stroke Connection magazine, a free magazine for stroke survivors and caregivers at strokeconnection.org.
3. Connect with others sharing similar journeys with stroke by joining our Support Network at strokeassociation.org/supportnetwork.

**Do you have questions for the doctor or nurse?**
Take a few minutes to write your questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider. For example:

- What is the most important change I can make?
- What kind of physical activity can I do safely?

My Questions:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one. Visit strokeassociation.org/letstalkaboutstroke to learn more.

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