



Stroke Prevention

DE-STRESS FOR THE PRESENTS AND GET THE GIFT OF A STROKE-FREE FUTURE

7 Tactics for Preventing Stroke

The holidays are a time where most of the risk factors for stroke can be increased; stress is the obvious one but risk factors like blood pressure, weight, diabetes, and alcohol all can see an increase over the holidays. Here are some tips for dealing with these risk:

1. Lower Blood Pressure - Consult your doctor on what a good blood pressure is for you. High blood pressure is the biggest contributor to the risk of a cardiac event and cardiovascular disease in both men and women. Lowering your blood pressure is the best step you can take towards a healthy life. This also means being conscious of what you eat over the holiday, we all know it's a time for over-indulgence but be smart with your indulgences.

2. Exercise – Among many other benefits, an increase in exercise helps to lose weight and lower your blood pressure. It also decrease your risk for disease and illness, as well as increasing your physical and mental well-being. Staying active can keep away those extra holiday pounds we all get as an unwanted gift for being naughty, and it doesn't need to be much just stay active. Whether you take up a yoga class, add in a few body weight exercises while you clean the house or increase your cardio by chasing the kids away from opening presents early. Anything is more than nothing and anything will help.

3. Drink alcohol (you're welcome) – Now that we've got your attention, moderation is the key here. It has been shown that one drink per day can lower your risk for stroke, however, once you have more than two drinks in a day that risk will spike up very rapidly. So break out the rum and eggnog to share with the family and everyone can have "one".

4. Lose those extra pounds – If you are overweight, losing 10-15 pounds can significantly reduce your risk for stroke. Obesity comes with a very high risk for stroke, and with obesity comes Hypertension (high blood pressure) and diabetes which both increase the risk of stroke on their own. We've all been here and followed the same path: eat everything in sight, satisfaction, regret, New Year resolution, I'll do better next year. We need to practice that horrible concept of self-control; eat 2 cookies instead of 10, some fruit instead of a fruit cake (because no one likes those anyways), and maybe share the pies for dessert. Whether you're 2 pounds over-weight or 200 pounds over-weight we can all benefit from having a little self-control over the holidays.

5. Treat Atrial Fibrillation – Atrial Fibrillation, if you have it, is a type of irregular heartbeat which can cause clots to form in the heart. These clots can then get pushed into the brain causing a stroke. This should be taken very seriously and see your doctor regularly if you are diagnosed with Atrial Fibrillation. Everyone gets treated a little better during the holidays, so should your heart.

6. Treat Diabetes – High levels of blood sugar will, over time, damage your blood vessels making it easier for clots to form. Any formation of clots carries the risk of the clot getting pushed to the brain and causing a stroke. It is good practice to monitor your blood sugars regularly. This means resist those sweets, I know your grandmother/mother will be pelting you with sweet during the holidays but that doesn't mean you have to eat them.

7. Don't Smoke – Smoking is bad for your health as a rule, but specifically for the risk of stroke smoking speeds up clot formation by thickening your blood and causing plaque to build up in your arteries, restriction blood flow. Furthermore smoking reduces your lung capacity, a lower lung capacity means high blood pressure, and higher blood pressure means a significant increase in the risk for a stroke. If that's not enough here's some holiday themed reasons to not smoke: you run the risk of burning the tree down, lighting a cigarette off the Menorah is frowned upon, you'll have to stand outside in the cold and missed treasured family moments, but most importantly you're more likely to make it to next year's holiday season.