

June is Stroke Awareness Month

Why is stroke awareness important?

There are many risk factors for stroke that are preventable such as quitting smoking, being physically active and eating a healthy diet. Knowing your risk factors for stroke, the warning signs and how to reduce your risk could help you or your loved ones live a healthier and more enjoyable life.

What is a stroke?

In a stroke, the brain is not getting enough oxygen. A blood clot or broken blood vessel blocks the normal blood flow to the brain. The interruption of blood flow to the brain can cause the cells in the affected area to die.

What are the warning signs of stroke?

You could be having a stroke if you suddenly experience any of these signs and symptoms:

Weakness: sudden weakness, numbness or tingling in your face, arm or leg

Trouble speaking: sudden temporary loss of speech or trouble understanding what people are saying

Vision problems: sudden loss of vision or trouble seeing out of one or both eyes

Headaches: sudden severe headache

Dizziness: sudden loss of balance, trouble walking, dizziness or a sudden fall, especially with any of the signs of symptoms above

If you notice any of the warning signs, call 911 right away. The earlier you get medical help, the better chance of getting treatment to reduce the effects of stroke.

Do you know your risk factors?

It's important to know your risks so you can take action to prevent a stroke. There are risk factors that you cannot change such as gender, age, family history and ethnicity. There are some risk factors that you can control:

- High blood pressure
- High blood cholesterol
- Excess body weight
- Poorly controlled blood sugars if you have diabetes
- Excessive alcohol consumption
- Physical Inactivity
- Smoking
- Poorly managed stress

How can you lower your risk of stroke?

Get active – The Heart and Stroke Foundation recommends getting 150 minutes of physical activity in a week. This can be reached in as little as ten minute intervals. Choose an activity you enjoy – gardening, swimming or turn up your favourite music and dance while you clean the house.

Eat healthy foods – Most often choose plant based foods such as fruit and vegetables, whole grains, nuts, legumes such as chickpeas, lentils or black beans. Choose lower fat animal foods such as fish, chicken or turkey more often than high fat animal foods such as butter, cheese, and deli meats. Limit sugary foods such as fruit juice and dessert foods. Visit [Eat Right Ontario](#) for information, recipes and contact information to speak to a Registered Dietitian by phone or email for free.

Limit alcohol consumption – Drinking too much alcohol can increase your risk of high blood pressure. If you choose to drink, men should have no more than 15 drinks a week or 3 drinks per day. Women should have no more than 10 drinks in a week or 2 drinks per day. A drink is considered:

- 341 mL (12 oz) bottle of 5% alcohol beer
- 142 mL (5oz) 12% alcohol wine,
- 43 mL (1.5 oz) 40% alcohol

Identify your sources of stress and take steps to manage – Be physically active, talk to friends or family, or make sure to build enjoyment into your life. [Visit the Heart and Stroke Foundation for more information on stress and preventing stroke.](#)

Quit smoking – For information on how to quit, call 1 877 513 5333 or visit <http://www.smokershelpline.ca/>

Visit your doctor regularly – Your doctor can help you manage high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes which are risk factors for stroke.

[Visit the Heart and Stroke Foundation website for a salmon and quinoa patty recipe and more recipes and information on stroke.](#)