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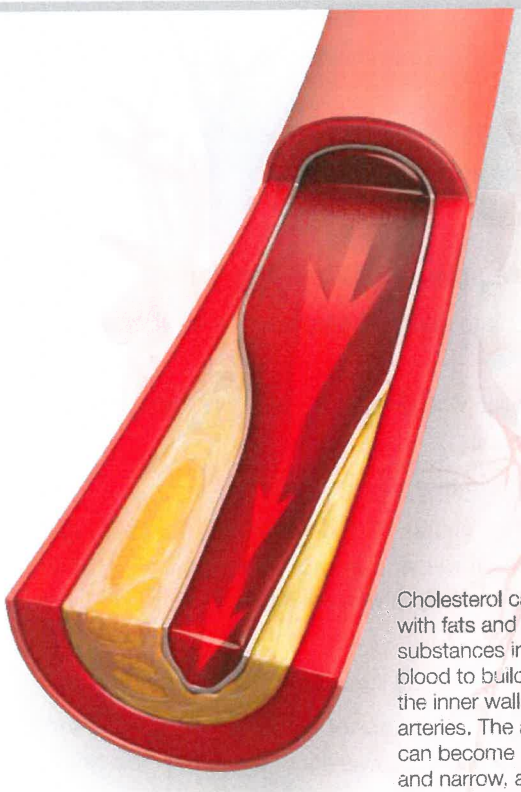
Learn and Live

How Can I Lower High Cholesterol?

Too much cholesterol in the blood can lead to heart disease and stroke — America's No. 1 and No. 4 killers.

You can reduce your cholesterol by eating healthful foods, losing weight if you need to and being physically active. Some people also need to take medicine because changing their diet isn't enough. Your doctor and nurses will help you set up a plan for reducing your cholesterol — and keeping yourself healthy!

Most heart and blood vessel disease is caused by a buildup of cholesterol, plaque and other fatty deposits in artery walls. The arteries that feed the heart can become so clogged that the blood flow is reduced, causing chest pain. If a blood clot forms and blocks the artery, a heart attack can occur. Similarly, if a blood clot blocks an artery leading to or in the brain, a stroke results.



Cholesterol can join with fats and other substances in your blood to build up in the inner walls of your arteries. The arteries can become clogged and narrow, and blood flow is reduced.

What should I eat?

Focus on low-saturated-fat, trans fat-free, low-cholesterol foods such as these:

- A variety of deeply colored fruits and vegetables (4 to 5 servings of each per day)
- A variety of fiber-rich grain products like whole grain bread, cereal, pasta and brown rice. (6 to 8 servings per day with at least half of the servings whole grains)
- Fat-free, 1 percent and low-fat milk products (2 to 3 servings per day)
- Lean meats and poultry without skin (choose up to 5 to 6 total ounces per day)
- Fatty fish (enjoy at least 2 servings baked or grilled each week)
- Nuts, seeds, and legumes (dried beans or peas) in limited amounts (4 to 5 servings per week)
- Unsaturated vegetable oils like canola, corn, olive, safflower and soybean oils (but a limited amount of tub or liquid unsalted margarines and spreads made from them)

What should I limit?

- Whole milk, cream and ice cream
- Butter, egg yolks and cheese — and foods made with them
- Organ meats like liver, sweetbreads, kidney and brain
- High-fat processed meats like sausage, bologna, salami and hot dogs
- Fatty meats that aren't trimmed
- Duck and goose meat (raised for market)
- Bakery goods made with egg yolks, saturated fats and trans fats.

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- Saturated oils like coconut oil, palm oil and palm kernel oil
- Solid fats like shortening, partially hydrogenated margarine and lard
- Fried foods

What are some cooking tips for me?

- Use a rack to drain off fat when you broil, roast or bake.
- Don't baste with drippings; use wine, fruit juice or marinade.
- Broil or grill instead of pan-frying.
- Cut off all visible fat from meat before cooking, and take all the skin off poultry pieces. (If you're roasting a whole chicken or turkey, remove the skin after cooking.)
- Use a vegetable oil spray to brown or sauté foods.
- Serve smaller portions of higher-fat dishes, and serve bigger portions of lower-fat dishes like pasta, rice, beans and vegetables.

- Make recipes or egg dishes with egg whites or egg substitutes, not yolks.
- Instead of regular cheese, use low-fat, low-sodium cottage cheese and other fat-free or low-fat, low-sodium cheeses.

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

1. **Talk to your doctor, nurse or other healthcare professionals.** If you have heart disease or have had a stroke, members of your family also may be at higher risk. It's very important for them to make changes now to lower their risk.
2. Call **1-800-AHA-USA1** (1-800-242-8721), or visit **heart.org** to learn more about heart disease.
3. For information on stroke, call **1-888-4-STROKE** (1-888-478-7653) or visit us at **StrokeAssociation.org**.

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 about eating out?

Why are weight control and physical activity important?

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 **heart.org/answersbyheart** to learn more.

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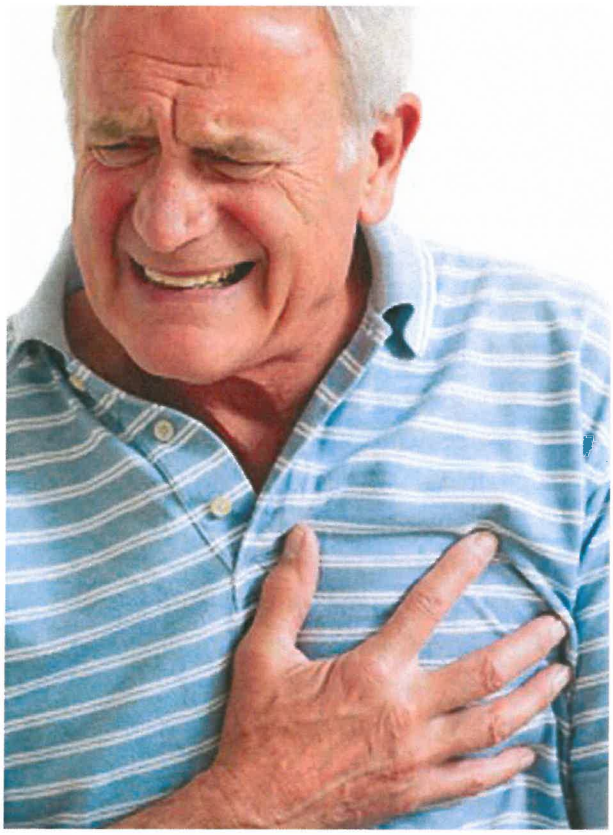
What Are the Warning Signs of Heart Attack?



Heart and blood vessel disease is our nation's No. 1 killer. About half of the deaths from heart and blood vessel disease are from coronary heart disease, which includes heart attack.

About 286,000 people a year die of coronary heart disease. But many of those deaths can be prevented — by acting fast!

Some heart attacks are sudden and intense. But most start slowly, with mild pain or discomfort. Here are some of the signs that can mean a heart attack is happening:

- **Chest discomfort.** Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or that goes away and comes back. It can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain.
- **Discomfort in other areas of the upper body.** Symptoms can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.
- **Shortness of breath.** May occur with or without chest discomfort.
- **Other signs:** These may include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness.

As with men, women's most common heart attack symptom is chest pain or discomfort. But women are somewhat more likely than men to experience some of the other common symptoms, particularly shortness of breath, nausea/vomiting, and back or jaw pain.

What should I do if I suspect a heart attack?

Don't wait more than five minutes before calling for help. **Call 9-1-1 or the local emergency medical services (EMS)** such as the fire department or ambulance.

What else can I do?

- If you're properly trained and it's necessary, you can give CPR (mouth-to-mouth rescue breathing and chest compressions) to a victim until help arrives.
- Before there's an emergency, it's a good idea to find out which hospitals in your area have 24-hour emergency cardiac care. Also, keep a list of emergency phone numbers next to your phone and with you at all times, just in case. Take these steps NOW.

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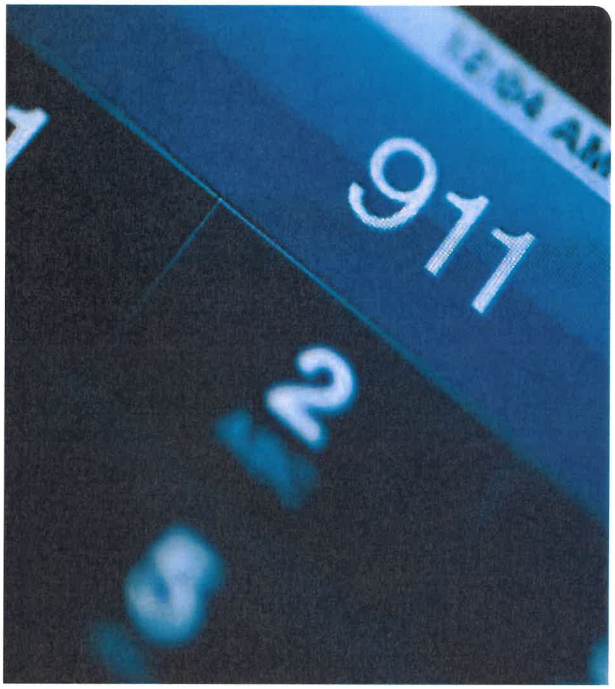
Why don't people act fast enough?

Many people having a heart attack wait more than two hours before getting help. Some people feel it would be embarrassing to have a "false alarm." Others are so afraid of having a heart attack that they tell themselves they aren't having one. These feelings are easy to understand, but they're also very dangerous.

If you or someone close to you shows signs of a heart attack, **call 9-1-1 and get help right away!**

How can I help to avoid a heart attack?

- Don't smoke, and avoid second-hand smoke.
- Treat high blood pressure if you have it.
- Eat foods that are low in saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol and salt.
- Be physically active.
- Keep your weight under control.
- Get regular medical check-ups.
- Take medicine as prescribed.
- Control your blood sugar if you have diabetes.



If you think you may be having a heart attack, don't hesitate... call 9-1-1 or your emergency response number immediately. Making the call could save your life.

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

1. **Talk to your doctor, nurse or other healthcare professionals.** If you have heart disease or have had a stroke, members of your family also may be at higher risk. It's very important for them to make changes now to lower their risk.
2. Call **1-800-AHA-USA1** (1-800-242-8721), or visit heart.org to learn more about heart disease.
3. For information on stroke, call **1-888-4-STROKE** (1-888-478-7653) or visit us at StrokeAssociation.org .

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:

How can I tell heart attack from angina?

How is a heart attack different from stroke?

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How Can I Cook Healthfully?

A healthful eating plan means more than choosing the right foods to eat. It's important to prepare foods in a healthy way. Some ways of cooking are better than others in cutting cholesterol, saturated fat, trans fat, total fat, sodium, added sugars and calories. At the same time, you want to get as much nutritional value as possible.

You don't have to give up taste or the things you love. Just learn some heart-healthful cooking skills and you can have it all (almost)!

Stir-frying is healthful and delicious! The high temperature and constant movement of the food keep it from sticking and burning. For vegetables, poultry or seafood, use a tiny bit of peanut oil.

What are good ways to cook?

- **Roast** — with a rack so the meat or poultry doesn't sit in its own fat drippings. Set at 350 degrees to avoid searing. Baste with fat-free, unsweetened liquids like wine, salt-free or low sodium tomato juice or lemon juice.
- **Bake** — in covered cookware with a little extra liquid.
- **Braise or Stew** — with more liquid than baking, on top of the stove or in the oven. Refrigerate the cooked dish and remove the chilled fat before reheating.
- **Poach** — by immersing skinless chicken or fish in simmering liquid.
- **Grill or Broil** — on a rack so fat drips away from the food.
- **Sauté** — in an open skillet over high heat. Use nonstick vegetable spray, a small amount of fat-free and salt-free or very low sodium broth or wine, or a tiny bit of canola oil rubbed onto the pan with a paper towel.
- **Stir-fry** — in a Chinese wok with a tiny bit of peanut oil.
- **Microwave** — needs no extra fat; in fact, you can drain food of fat by placing it between two paper towels while it cooks.
- **Steam** — in a basket over simmering water.

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How Can I Cook Healthfully?

How can I cut fat and calories without losing taste?

- After browning, put ground meat into a strainer lined with paper towels.
- To make gravy without fat, blend a tablespoon of cornstarch with a cup of room-temperature fat-free and salt-free or very low sodium broth by shaking them together in a jar. Heat the rest of the broth and add the blended liquid, simmering until thick.
- Make scrambled eggs or omelets using only one egg yolk per portion, and add a few extra egg whites to the batch. Or use an egg substitute product.
- Remove oils by draining canned tuna, salmon or sardines and rinsing them in water. Choose canned fish packed in water with no added salt or low sodium.
- Don't overcook vegetables. Steam or bake them instead of boiling so they keep more of their natural flavors and nutrients.
- Mix creamy salt-free or very low sodium salad dressing with plain low-fat yogurt.

Instead of boiling vegetables, steam or bake them to keep more of their natural flavors and nutrients.

- Use finely chopped vegetables to stretch ground poultry or meat.
- Use herbs and spices to add flavor to foods.

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

1. **Talk to your doctor, nurse or other healthcare professionals.** If you have heart disease or have had a stroke, members of your family also may be at higher risk. It's very important for them to make changes now to lower their risk.
2. Call **1-800-AHA-USA1** (1-800-242-8721), or visit heart.org to learn more about heart disease.
3. For information on stroke, call **1-888-4-STROKE** (1-888-478-7653) or visit us at StrokeAssociation.org .

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 about desserts?

What's a good, healthful cookbook?

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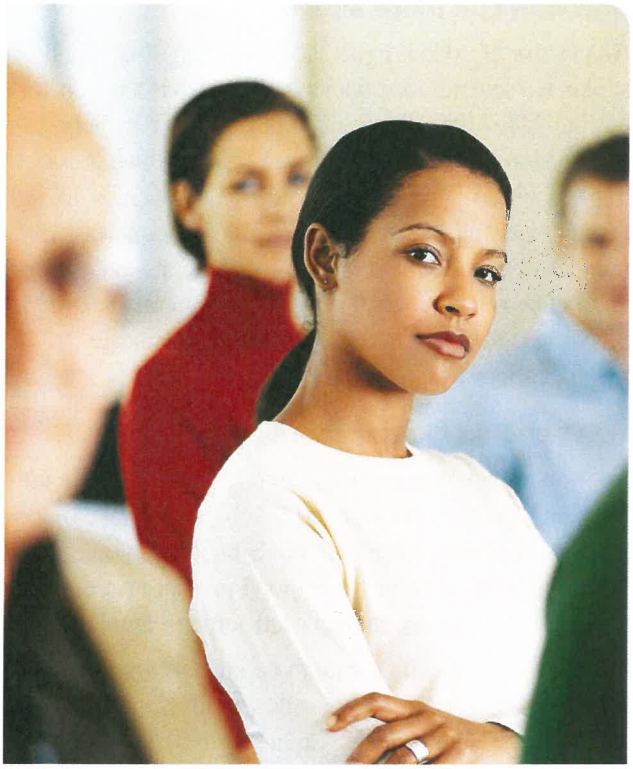
How Can I Reduce High Blood Pressure?

By treating high blood pressure, you can help reduce your risk for a stroke, heart attack, heart failure or kidney failure. Here are steps you can take now:

- Lose weight if you're overweight.
- Eat a heart-healthy diet low in saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol, salt (sodium) and added sugars. Eat a variety of deeply-colored fruits and vegetables; fiber-rich whole grains; fat-free, 1 percent fat and low-fat dairy products; lean meats and skinless poultry; fish with healthy omega-3 fatty acids; and nuts, seeds, and legumes.
- Be more physically active.
- Limit alcohol to no more than one drink per day for women or two drinks a day for men.
- Take medicine the way your doctor tells you.
- Know what your blood pressure should be and work to keep it at that level.



Many people have high blood pressure without knowing it. Once you know about your condition, though, you can reduce your risk and live a healthier life. It takes proper treatment and some changes in your lifestyle. But it's worth it!

How can I lose weight?

If you're overweight, you're putting too much strain on your heart. Talk with your healthcare provider about a healthy eating plan. When you lose weight, your blood pressure often goes down! By eating a heart healthy diet low in saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol, salt (sodium) and added sugars, you'll help reduce your risk for heart attack and stroke.

How do I limit salt?

Eating a lot of salt (sodium) increases blood pressure in many people. It holds excess fluid in your body and puts an added burden on your heart. Your doctor may tell you to cut down on the salt you use in cooking and not add salt to foods. He or she may also tell you to avoid salt completely.

Read food labels so you'll know which foods are high in sodium. And learn to use herbs and salt-free spices instead!

How do I limit alcohol?

Ask your doctor if you're allowed to drink alcohol, and if so, how much. If you drink more than two drinks a day if you're male or more than one drink a day if you're female, it may add to high blood pressure. One drink is equal to 12 ounces of beer, 4 ounces of wine, 1.5 ounces of 80-proof distilled spirits or 1 ounce of 100-proof spirits. If cutting back on alcohol is hard for you to do on your own, ask about community groups that can help.

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How can I be more active?

An inactive lifestyle is a risk factor for heart disease and stroke. It also tends to add to obesity, which is a risk factor for high blood pressure. Regular physical activity helps to reduce blood pressure, control weight and reduce stress. It's best to start slowly and do something you enjoy, like taking brisk walks or riding a bicycle. Aim for at least 150 minutes (2 hours and 30 minutes) of moderate-intensity, or 75 minutes (1 hour and 15 minutes) of vigorous-intensity, aerobic exercise each week. Talk to your healthcare provider about a good plan for you.

What should I know about medicine?

Your doctors may prescribe different types of medicine for you. Don't be discouraged if you need to take blood pressure medicine from now on. Sometimes you can take smaller doses after your blood pressure is under control, but you may always need some treatment.

What's most important is that you take your medicine exactly the way your doctor tells you to. Never stop treatment on your own. If you have problems or side effects with your medicine, talk to your doctor.

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

1. **Talk to your doctor, nurse or other healthcare professionals.** If you have heart disease or have had a stroke, members of your family also may be at higher risk. It's very important for them to make changes now to lower their risk.
2. Call **1-800-AHA-USA1** (1-800-242-8721), or visit **heart.org** to learn more about heart disease.
3. For information on stroke, call **1-888-4-STROKE** (1-888-478-7653) or visit us at **StrokeAssociation.org**.

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:

Can I drink any alcohol?

How often should my blood pressure be checked?

My Questions:

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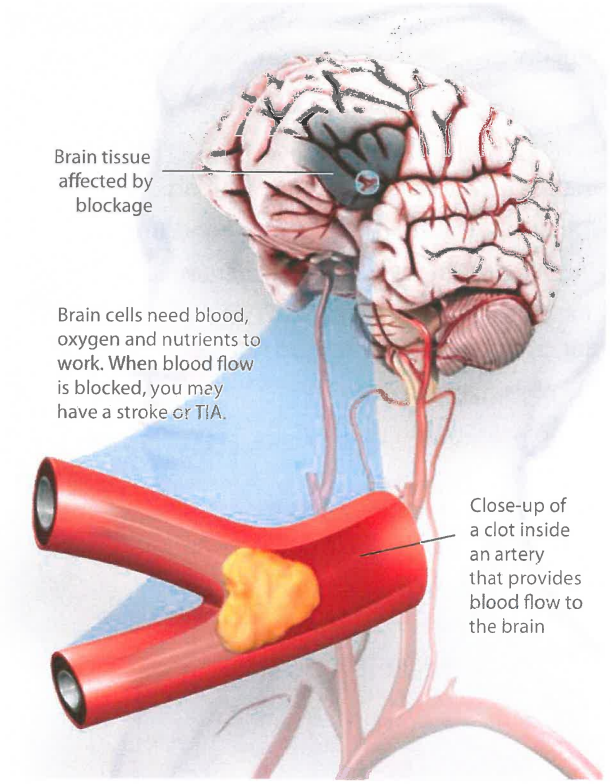
What Are the Warning Signs of Stroke?



Stroke is the fourth leading cause of death in America today. It's also a major cause of severe, long-term disability. People over 55 years old have more chance of stroke, and the risk gets greater as you get older. Men, African Americans and people with diabetes or heart disease are the most at risk for stroke. About 7 million people who have had strokes are alive today.

To protect yourself and your loved ones from the serious effects of stroke, you should:

- Learn your risk factors.
- Reduce your risk factors.
- Learn the warning signs of stroke.
- Know what to do if you notice warning signs.

Knowing the signs of stroke is important. If you act fast and go to a hospital right away, you could reduce the effects of a stroke or save your life!

You and your family should learn the warning signs of stroke that are listed below. You may have some or all of them:

- **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, loss of balance or coordination**
- **Sudden, severe headache with no known cause**

How does stroke happen?

A stroke happens when a blood vessel that feeds the brain gets blocked (ischemic stroke) or bursts (hemorrhagic stroke). Then that part of the brain can't work, and neither can the part of the body it controls.

TIAs, or transient ischemic attacks, are "warning strokes" that can happen before a major stroke. They happen when a blood clot clogs an artery for a short time. The signs of a TIA are like a stroke, but they usually last only a few minutes. If you have any of these signs, get to a hospital right away!

Uncontrolled high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, smoking and heart disease put you at a higher risk for stroke.

What should I do if I suspect a stroke?

Call 9-1-1 or the emergency medical services (EMS) in your area (fire department or ambulance) immediately. It's important to get to a hospital right away. Also, check the time so you'll know when the first symptoms appeared. It's very important to take immediate action. If given within three hours of the

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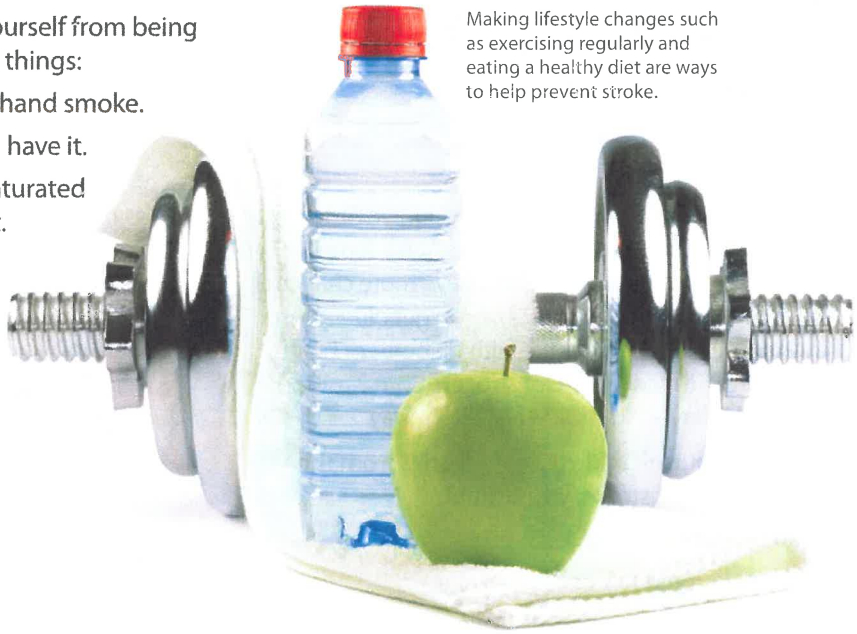
start of symptoms, a clot-busting drug can reduce long-term disability for the most common type of stroke.

How can I help prevent stroke?

You could save your life or save yourself from being disabled by stroke if you do these things:

- Don't smoke, and avoid second-hand smoke.
- Treat high blood pressure, if you have it.
- Eat a healthy diet that's low in saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol and salt.
- Be physically active.
- Keep your weight under control.
- Follow your doctor's orders for taking medicine.
- Control your blood sugar if you have diabetes.
- Get regular medical check-ups.



Making lifestyle changes such as exercising regularly and eating a healthy diet are ways to help prevent stroke.

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

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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:

How would I recover from stroke?

How is stroke different from heart attack?

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