

Preventing Recurrent Stroke: Eating Healthy



Eating healthy foods helps lower cholesterol and reduce plaque buildup in arteries. It can also help you lose weight and keep high blood pressure under control. Eating better doesn't necessarily mean going on a special diet, unless you have diabetes or high blood pressure. Instead, the idea is to make healthier choices by limiting foods and ingredients that contribute to risk factors for stroke.

Meats

Instead of:

- Beef and other red meats
- Hamburger
- Processed lunch meats

Try:

- Fish, skinless chicken, or tofu
- Ground turkey
- Chicken or turkey breast slices

Sweets and snacks

Instead of:

- Soda pop
- Chips and other salty snacks
- Donuts and croissants

Try:

- Water
- Nuts, seeds, air-popped popcorn
- Fresh fruit, whole-grain raisin bread

Grains

Instead of:

- White bread
- White rice
- Regular pasta or noodles
- White potatoes

Try:

- Whole-grain bread
- Brown rice
- Whole-grain pasta or noodles
- Sweet potatoes

Dairy

Instead of:

- Whole milk
- Regular cheese and mayonnaise
- Ice cream
- Butter

Try:

- 1% or skim milk
- Low-fat cheese and mayonnaise
- Low-fat yogurt
- Olive or canola oil

Choose the right mix of foods

The key to good eating is having a variety of healthy foods. Try to plan meals around vegetables, fruits, lean meats, and whole grains. Limit fatty meats and high-fat dairy products. The chart below can show you the best way to fill up your plate.

1. Drink water or low-fat (1% or fat-free) milk with meals. Don't drink sugary sodas or salty vegetable juices.

2. At least half the plate should be vegetables and fruits. Limit fatty toppings, such as butter, salad dressing, and sour cream.
3. No more than 1 quarter of the plate should be meat or other protein. Fish, beans, tofu, and lean cuts of poultry are best. Bake or broil meat instead of frying.
4. About 1 quarter of the plate can be starchy foods, such as rice and potatoes. Whole grains, such as brown rice or whole-wheat bread, are best.

Try healthier choices

Giving up old food habits doesn't have to be hard. Here are some easy ways to choose healthier choices:

Choose fats wisely

Reducing "bad" fats in your diet helps keep your arteries healthier. Use this guide:

- **Choose unsaturated fats.** These are found in foods, such as fish, nuts, olive oil, canola oil, and avocados. In moderation, these fats can be good for you.
- **Limit saturated fats.** These are found in meat and dairy foods, such as burgers, poultry skin, milk, cheese, and butter.
- **Don't have trans fats.** These are often found in processed foods. Skip any foods that have the word hydrogenated in their ingredients.

Reduce sodium (salt)

You may be asked to eat less sodium (salt). If you have high blood pressure, your healthcare provider will probably recommend that you limit your sodium intake to 1,500 mg to 2,400 mg per day. Use these tips:

- Look for food labels that have the words salt free or very low sodium. Always check for the number of servings per container on the food label, as a container of food may have more than 1 serving.
- Don't eat canned or packaged foods, such as canned soup, instant noodles, TV dinners, and premade sauces.
- Don't add salt or soy sauce to meals. Use fresh herbs or lemon juice for seasoning. Your taste buds will adjust.
- Skip the fast food. Look for "heart healthy" items on restaurant menus. These are often lower in fat and salt.

For family and friends

Support makes it easier to stick with a healthy eating plan. Good eating habits are easier when everyone joins in. It helps when everyone in the family shops for and eats healthy foods.

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