



Stroke & Nutrition

A **stroke** occurs when there is a change in the flow of blood to the brain that leads to a change in and/or loss of function. Some risk factors for stroke include:

- High blood pressure
- Stress
- Family history
- Health conditions including diabetes, heart disease, and obesity
- Lifestyle factors, such as a diet high in fat and cholesterol, lack of exercise, and smoking



The effects of a stroke can vary, and depend on the location of the damage in the brain and the amount of damage. There may be changes in behavior or the ability to perform daily activities. Some individuals may find it more difficult to feed themselves or swallow. If these problems are present, an Occupational Therapist can help with self feeding, while a Speech Therapist can help with swallowing problems. A doctor can help determine appropriate treatment options.

Healthy eating may help with weight and blood pressure management, which can help to prevent another stroke. In general, healthy eating involves:

- **Low sodium:** to help control blood pressure.
- **Plenty of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and fat-free or low-fat dairy products:** to help keep blood pressure under control.
- **Choosing heart-healthy fats:** such as soybean, canola, olive, or flaxseed oil over saturated fats and trans fats to reduce the buildup of plaque in your blood vessels.

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There are many ways to incorporate healthy eating into your diet. Some ways to start include:

- Choose foods with less than 300 milligrams (mg) of sodium per serving.
- Use herbs and spices, or herb mixes (e.g., Mrs. Dash) to flavor food.
- Choose carefully when eating out. Restaurant foods can be high in sodium.
- Choose fiber-rich foods. These include fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Choose fruits like bananas, oranges, cantaloupe, and apples, and vegetables like sweet potatoes, spinach, zucchini, and tomatoes. Whole grains include whole wheat bread products, oatmeal, brown rice, and quinoa.
- Eat fatty, cold-water fish (e.g., salmon, mackerel, and sardines) twice a week. These provide heart healthy fats. Try to choose fresh or frozen varieties, as canned may be too high in sodium.
- Limit saturated fat and trans fat. Saturated fats are found mostly in animal foods, foods made with animal products, or fried foods. Trans fats are found in meat and foods that contain hydrogenated oils (e.g., peanut butter and margarine).
- Limit cholesterol from food to 200 mg per day. Foods high in cholesterol include egg yolks, shrimp, and full fat dairy foods.

Check with a dietitian or doctor for your specific dietary needs.



Additional Notes: