



The Brain Buzz

A UAMS NEWSLETTER FOR STROKE SURVIVORS AND
THEIR CAREGIVERS

Need Some Support?

Each week, stroke survivor Molly Schwarz visits patients at UAMS on H8 that have had a stroke. If you are interested in having her visit with you to share her experience and provide support, please let your nurse know.



UAMS[®]

For a Better State of Health

How to Prevent a Stroke

Written by:

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If you or a loved one has ever had a stroke, then you know how scary it can be. Symptoms can range from mild to severe. Severe strokes can lead to significant disability, coma, or even death. Even mild strokes can have a lasting effect on daily life for you and your family. Unfortunately, once a stroke happens, often there is very little that can be done to improve the symptoms.

Because of this, preventing a stroke from happening is very important! Here are a few of the many ways to decrease the risk of having a stroke:



Control blood pressure – Some strokes happen because of high blood pressure. Get your blood pressure checked often by a doctor. If you have high blood pressure, make sure to take your prescribed medication when are supposed to and at the same time each day. Don't stop taking any medications unless your doctor tells you.

Eat healthy – Some strokes are caused by clots in the blood vessels leading to the brain. A diet high in fruits, vegetables, and lean meats (like chicken and fish) can lower cholesterol levels and prevent clots. The American Heart Association also recommends decreasing the amount of sugar (found in high amounts in packaged sweets and sodas) and salt in your diet.

Avoid smoking/alcohol – Smoking causes blood vessels to narrow and weaken, which can lead to strokes. Decreasing your current smoking can help, but quitting altogether is even better. If you use alcohol, only drink in small amounts. More than 2 servings per day for men, and more than 1 drink per day for women can be harmful. One serving of alcohol is equal to 12 ounces of beer (1 can), 5 ounces of wine (1 glass), or 1.5 ounces (1 shot) of hard liquor.

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Emotions After a Stroke

Right after a stroke, a survivor may respond one way, yet weeks later respond differently. Some survivors may react with understandable sadness; others may be amazingly cheerful. These emotional reactions may occur because of biological or psychological causes due to stroke. These changes may vary with time and can interfere with rehabilitation.

- Tell yourself that your feelings aren't "good" or "bad." Let yourself cope without feeling guilty about your emotions.

- Find people who understand what you're feeling. Ask about a support group.
- Get enough exercise and do enjoyable activities.
- Give yourself credit for the progress you've made. Celebrate the large and small gains.
- Learn to "talk" to yourself in a positive way.
- Allow yourself to make mistakes.
- Ask your doctor for help. Ask for a referral to a mental health specialist for psychological counseling or antidepressant medication if needed for depression.
- Make sure you get enough sleep at night. Sometimes lack of sleep can cause emotional changes.

*Source: American Stroke Association, 2012

How to Prevent a Stroke Continued....

Exercise – An active lifestyle can decrease your risk for stroke as well. Even as little as 30 minutes of walking per day is helpful. Gradually increase your exercise to include brisk walking, jogging, or other more intense exercises on most days of the week.



Keep regular doctor visits – Health problems such as diabetes, high cholesterol, and certain heart conditions can make you more likely to have a stroke. A doctor can tell if you are at risk for a stroke and help you lower that risk with lifestyle changes and medications. If you are taking medications, make sure to follow up with your doctor regularly to ensure your medications are working as they should.

Know the symptoms – Unfortunately, there is no perfect way to prevent strokes from happening, and they can occur without warning. Signs of a stroke include weakness or numbness on one side of your body, facial drooping, difficulty speaking or slurred words, double vision or blurry vision, and dizziness that doesn't go away. Even if they are temporary and completely resolve, it can be a warning sign of a more severe stroke that may happen soon. Although it is best to prevent strokes, if you do have a stroke, it must be treated very quickly. Call 911 immediately if you think you or someone you know is having a stroke.



Caregivers: Need Help After Your Loved One Has Had a Stroke?

The website provided by the American Stroke Association can help. This website provides many resources for caregivers to help you to manage the stressful time right after a stroke. Go to www.strokeassociation.org, click on “Life After Stroke” and then on “Family Caregivers.” If you aren’t able to access the internet, call the American Stroke Association at 1-888-4-STROKE.

Adaptive Clothing for Stroke Survivors

By Dana Smith, MS, MCCHES
Patient Education Department

Special needs clothing, also known as adaptive clothing, can be very helpful for people who are disabled or have a limited range of motion and need help getting dressed. Adaptive clothing allows the wearer to retain his or her dignity and provide some level of self-care.

Specific products you might find include:

- Front zip dresses for women who have weakness in her arms.
- Elastic waist band slacks with loops in the front to pull slacks on with ease
- Snap back shirts which are easy to slide on and off and for the caregiver to snap
- Velcro fasteners rather than buttons
- Side zippers which are good for those who have weakness in the legs
- Lap robes for patients needing to be in a wheelchair



What to Look for When Purchasing Adaptive Clothing:

- Materials that aren’t abrasive to the skin
- High quality fabric that can hold up to cleaning
- Fasteners that are not located on tender areas of the body
- Feel natural and comfortable
- Correct sizing
- Look like normal clothes and not medical clothes.
- Do not hang where they could get caught in wheelchair wheels or a walker

Following are some companies that sell adaptive clothing.**

Silvert’s

www.silverts.com

800-387-7088

Buck & Buck

www.buckandbuck.com

800-458-0600

Adaptive Clothing Showroom

www.adaptiveclothingshowroom.com

845-352-1674

BH Medwear

www.bhmedwear.com

866-992-4633

³ **UAMS does not endorse any of these businesses and there are many other companies that also provide adaptive clothing.

**Need More
Information
About Stroke?**



National Stroke Association

1-800-STROKES (787-6537)

www.stroke.org

American Stroke Association

1-888-4-STROKE (478-7653)

www.strokeassociation.org

UAMS Neurology Department

501-686-5838

<http://neurology.uams.edu/>

Could you be at risk for **STROKE?**

Do you have high blood pressure? High cholesterol?

Diabetes? Excess weight? Heart problems?

A family history of stroke or aneurysms? Do you smoke?

All of these factors put you at a higher risk for stroke.

A stroke occurs when blood circulation to the brain fails due to either a blocked or ruptured blood vessel. The resulting lack of oxygen to brain cells can impair brain function. **STROKE IS THE THIRD LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH IN THE UNITED STATES.** Of the roughly 600,000 new and recurrent cases of stroke each year, 160,000 are fatal. **CURRENTLY, THERE ARE 4 MILLION STROKE SURVIVORS, MANY OF WHOM HAVE SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES.**

STROKE RISK FACTORS

ESTIMATED INCREASE IN RISK

ATRIAL FIBRILLATION	17 times
HYPERTENSION	2 TO 4
CARDIAC DISEASE	2 TO 4
NO EXERCISE	1.8 TO 3.5
DIABETES	1.5 TO 2.5
SMOKING	1.5 TO 2.5
HEAVY ALCOHOL USE	1 TO 3