



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

Preventing a Second Stroke

Written by:

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Did you know that 1 in 4 people who have a stroke will have another one during their life? Death and injury are higher with a second stroke because the brain has already been hurt and doesn't heal as well. Handling changes to your body after leaving the hospital can be difficult. When dealing with these changes, it is important not to forget about lowering the risks



of a second stroke. You can lower your chance of another stroke by eating healthy, exercising, and stopping unhealthy habits like smoking. Medical problems such as diabetes or "a-fib" can raise your risk of stroke. You should take any medicines that you have been prescribed for these illnesses. Your doctor may also start you on some new medicines.

Blood Pressure Medications - Having high blood pressure makes you one and a half times more likely to have a stroke. It is important to follow your doctor's directions for these medications carefully. Follow up with your doctor regularly to have your blood pressure checked. It may take several visits and changes to your medicines to reach your goal blood pressure.

Cholesterol Lowering Medications - Strokes can be caused by a fatty material called cholesterol that builds up in your blood vessels. Lowering cholesterol can lower your risk of a second stroke. Regular doctor visits for blood work are important to make sure that these medications are working and not causing side effects.

Blood Thinners - Blood thinners can decrease your chance of making blood clots that lead to stroke. They are usually taken once a day and most don't

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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

Preventing a Second Stroke Continued....

need any special testing. Another type, warfarin, does need frequent blood tests to make sure the dose is right. Blood thinners lower your risk of stroke but raise your risk of bleeding. Your doctor can help you understand your risks and how to take your new medicines.

Studies show that at least 25 percent of stroke survivors stop taking some of their medicines within the first 3 months after their stroke. This is dangerous! You should always take your medicines as prescribed. Talk to your doctor before starting or stopping any new medicines. Regular check-ups can help to make sure all of your medicines are working to keep you from having another stroke.

If you do have a second stroke, recognizing the symptoms early is very important. It can be hard for doctors who don't know you to tell what are new stroke symptoms and what are left over from an old stroke. Any new or worsening weakness, numbness, vision changes, speech changes, confusion, dizziness, or difficulty with balance should be checked out in the Emergency Department. If you think that you may be having a stroke, call 911. The longer you wait the less your chances of getting better. Time is brain!





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, MCHES
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

Adaptive Clothing Showroom
www.adaptiveclothingshowroom.com
845-352-1674

Buck & Buck
www.buckandbuck.com
800-458-0600

BH Medwear
www.bhmedwear.com
866-992-4633



**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 |