

## **May is American Stroke Awareness Month.**

According to the American Heart Association, someone in the United States has a stroke every 40 seconds, accounting for one out of every 19 deaths. Stroke is a leading cause of death and serious disability nationwide and around the world. But it doesn't have to be.

With May being National Stroke Awareness month, it's important to know that stroke is 80% preventable.

### **What's a stroke?**

A stroke is when blood flow to a part of the brain is blocked or when a blood vessel in the brain bursts. Blood carries oxygen to cells in the body. When brain cells are starved of blood, they die. Stroke is a medical emergency. It's important to get care as soon as possible. Some treatments for stroke work only if given the first three hours after symptoms start. A delay in care can raise the risk of permanent brain damage or death.

### **Healthy lifestyle choices.**

You can help prevent stroke with healthy lifestyle choices.

#### **Healthy diet.**

Choosing healthy meal and snack choices can help prevent stroke. Eat plenty of fresh fruits and veggies. Eating foods low in saturated fats, trans fat, and cholesterol and high in fiber can prevent high cholesterol. Limiting salt in your diet can also lower your blood pressure. High cholesterol and high blood pressure raise your chances of a stroke

#### **Healthy weight.**

Being overweight or obese increases your risk for stroke. To find out if your weight is in a healthy range, doctors often figure out your body mass index (BMI). If you know your weight and height, you can calculate your BMI at the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Assessing Your Weight website](#). Doctors sometimes also use waist and hip measurements to measure excess body fat.

#### **Physical activity.**

Physical activity can help you stay at a healthy weight and lower your cholesterol and blood pressure levels. For adults, the Surgeon General suggests two-and-a-half hours of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity, like a brisk walk, each week.

#### **No smoking.**

Cigarette smoking greatly increases your chances of having a stroke. If you don't smoke, don't start. If you smoke, quitting lowers your risk for stroke. Your doctor can suggest ways to help you quit.

#### **Limited alcohol.**

Avoid drinking too much alcohol, which can raise your blood pressure. Men should have no more than two drinks per day, and women only one.

#### **Talk to your doctor.**

Maintain a good relationship with your doctor to help manage conditions that can increase your risk of stroke. This can include high blood pressure and diabetes, among others.

**Five key facts about stroke:**

#1: Stroke kills brain cells. It happens when a clot or rupture interrupts blood flow to the brain. Without oxygen-rich blood, brain cells die.

#2: Stroke types.

- Ischemic: caused by a clot.
- Hemorrhagic: caused by a rupture.
- Transient Ischemic Attack (TIA) or "mini stroke": caused by a temporary blockage.

#3: About one in four stroke survivors is at risk for another. Luckily, up to 80 percent of second clot-related strokes may be preventable.

#4: Prevention is key. Had a stroke? Make a plan with your doctor to stop another. This may include managing high blood pressure and aspirin or other medicine. Aspirin isn't right for all people. Talk to your doctor first.

#5: Time lost is brain lost. Learn the **FAST** warning signs.

- F - Face Drooping
- A - Arm Weakness
- S - Speech Difficulty
- T - Time to call 911

(The above is taken from a blog by Dr. Charles Bloom and website of the Health Alliance Plan of Michigan- <https://www.hap.org/blog/2021/05/may-is-national-stroke-awareness-month>)

To contact Diane or Glenn, parish nurses, you can leave a message for them at 540-662-3824.