

# HealthyBy Choice

...One Day at a Time

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## STROKE AWARENESS MONTH

Stroke is dangerous and deadly — the No. 5 killer and a leading cause of disability in America. **But you can control and treat several risk factors for stroke.**

**High Blood Pressure.** High blood pressure, or hypertension, is a leading cause of stroke and the most significant controllable risk factor. So know your numbers and keep them low.

**Smoking.** The nicotine and carbon monoxide in cigarette smoke damage the cardiovascular system and pave the way for a stroke. The use of birth control pills combined with cigarette smoking can greatly increase the risk of stroke.

**Diabetes.** If you have Type 1 or 2 diabetes, control your blood sugar. Diabetes mellitus is an independent risk factor for stroke. Many people with diabetes also have high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol and are overweight — increasing their risk even more. While diabetes is treatable, the presence of the disease still increases your risk of stroke.

**Diet.** Diets high in saturated fat, trans fat and cholesterol can raise blood cholesterol levels. Diets high in sodium (salt) can increase blood pressure. Diets with high calories can lead to obesity. But a diet containing five or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day may reduce the risk of stroke. The American Heart Association Diet and Lifestyle Recommendations outlines a healthy diet. It's based on these recommendations, which are easier to follow than you may think.

**Physical Inactivity.** Physical inactivity can increase your risk of stroke, heart disease, overweight/obesity, high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol and diabetes. Aim for being active at least 150 minutes a week, but if you don't want to sweat the numbers, just move more and sit less.

**Obesity.** Excess body weight and obesity are linked with an increased risk of high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease and stroke. Losing as little as 5 to 10 pounds can make a significant difference in your risks. Even if weight control has been a lifelong challenge, start by taking small steps today to manage your weight and lower risks.

**High Blood Cholesterol.** Large amounts of cholesterol in the blood can build up and cause blood clots — leading to a stroke. Also, it appears that low HDL ("good") cholesterol is a risk factor for stroke in men, but more data is needed to verify if this is true for women as well.

## IS IT A STROKE?

Check these signs **FAST!**



**F**ACE. Ask the person to smile. Does the face look uneven?



**A**RM. Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift down?



**S**PEECH. Ask the person to repeat a phrase. Does their speech sound strange?



**T**IME. Call 9-1-1 immediately and note the time of first symptoms.



Know the signs...time matters!!



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## Mental Health Month

- Mental health is essential to everyone's overall health and well-being, and mental illnesses are common and treatable.
- A healthy lifestyle can help to prevent the onset or worsening of mental health conditions, as well as chronic conditions like heart disease, diabetes, and obesity. It can also help people recover from these conditions.
- For those dealing with a chronic health condition and the people who care for them, it can be especially important to focus on mental health. When dealing with dueling diagnoses, focusing on both the physical and mental health concerns can be daunting – but critically important in achieving overall wellness.
- Humor, spirituality, recreation, animal companionship, and work-life balance are important for everyone, but may be of special importance to people also living with chronic health conditions and those who care for them.
- Finding a reason to laugh, going for a walk, meditating, playing with a pet, or working from home once a week can go a long way in making you both physically and mentally healthy.
- The company of animals – whether as pets or service animals – can have a profound impact on a person's quality of life and ability to recover from illnesses. A pet can be a source of comfort and can help us to live mentally healthier lives.
- Sometimes life is far from funny but finding humor in a situation can lift moods with laughter and help people to better deal with and overcome difficult experiences.
- Whether you go to church, meditate daily, or simply find time to enjoy that cup of tea each morning while checking in with yourself – it can be important to connect with your spiritual side in order to find that mindbody connection.
- Living a healthy lifestyle may not be easy but can be achieved by gradually making small changes and building on those successes.
- Finding the balance between work and play, the ups and downs of life, physical health and mental health, can help you on the path towards focusing both #4Mind4Body.

MAY IS 2  
MENTAL 0  
HEALTH 1  
MONTH 9  
#4MIND4BODY

LEARN ABOUT HEALTH - 4MIND4BODY  
at [bit.ly/MayMH](http://bit.ly/MayMH).

SHARE WHAT YOU DO TO STAY WELL  
by posting with #4Mind4Body.

SEE WHAT OTHERS ARE DOING  
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Mental Health Matters!

