
Experts Issue New Stroke-Prevention Guidelines

FRIDAY, May 5 (HealthDay News) -- Experts with the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association are stressing healthy habits and appropriate treatments to prevent stroke in their new "primary prevention guidelines" issued Thursday.

The new recommendations appear in the current issue of *Stroke*.

Each year, strokes strike about 700,000 people in the United States, resulting in nearly 158,000 deaths. Stroke is the third leading cause of death and a major cause of disability in the U.S. From 1993 to 2003, the stroke death rate in the U.S. fell 18.5 percent. However, the actual number of stroke deaths declined only 0.7 percent.

The new guidelines to reduce the risk of stroke include these primary prevention measures:

For Patients:

1. Have regular screenings for high blood pressure -- at least every two years in adults and more frequently in minorities and the elderly -- and keep blood pressure under control.
2. Don't smoke, and eliminate exposure to secondhand smoke.
3. If you have diabetes, maintain tight control of blood pressure. If you have diabetes and other stroke risk factors, talk to your doctor about taking a cholesterol-lowering statin drug.
4. Reduce your intake of salt (no more than 2.3 grams of sodium a day), and increase your intake of potassium (at least 4.7 grams a day) in order to lower high blood pressure. Eat a diet high in fruit, vegetables, low-fat dairy products and low in saturated and total fat.
5. Lower total cholesterol to acceptable levels.
6. Lose weight, which can lower blood pressure.
7. Get moderately intensive physical activity for at least 30 minutes a day.



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