

# Healthy eating following a stroke



Following a stroke/TIA, a cardioprotective diet may reduce your chance of a further event as well as improving your general wellbeing.



## Eat more fruit and vegetables

**They contain anti-oxidants which prevent damage to your arteries that lead to stroke.**

- At least 5 portions per day can reduce your risk of stroke significantly.
- As wide a variety as possible – choose a range of colours daily.
- Fresh, frozen and canned all count towards the total.

## Increase your consumption of oily fish

- Increase your fish consumption aiming for at least 2 portions of fish every week, including a portion of oily fish.
- Try herring, mackerel, pilchards, sardines, salmon, tuna, trout or kippers; fresh, frozen or tinned.
- Pregnant women are advised to not exceed 2 portions per week, avoiding marlin, shark and swordfish.

**One portion of oily fish is 125-150g**

## Modify your fat intake

Reduce the amount of cholesterol and saturated fat in your diet, replacing them with mono-unsaturated and polyunsaturated fats. To do this:

### Limit:

- butter, ghee, lard
- red meat and visible fat on meat
- meat processed products (sausages, burgers, pies and pasties)
- confectionary, pastries, cakes, biscuits.

### Choose:

- low fat dairy products eg skimmed/semi-skimmed milk, low fat cheese and yoghurts
- fish and lean meat
- an olive oil, rapeseed oil or spreads based on these oils
- raw unsalted nuts.

**Saturated fat can increase cholesterol levels**

## Increase your fibre

### Choose:

- granary, seeded or wholemeal bread
- wholegrain breakfast cereals (eg porridge, Ready-Brek®, Weetabix®, Fruit & Fibre®, Shredded Wheat®, no-added sugar muesli)
- jacket potatoes
- brown rice & whole wheat pasta
- eat at least 4-5 portions of unsalted nuts, seeds and legumes (lentils, peas & beans) every week.

**Fibre can help lower cholesterol and so reduce stroke risk**

## Reduce the salt in your diet

**Too much salt can increase blood pressure**

- Limit to 1 teaspoon per day (6g salt = 2.4g sodium) by:
  - using little or no salt in cooking
  - not adding table salt
  - avoiding high-salt foods (eg processed, ready-made and prepared meals, cheese, stock cubes, savoury snacks).
- Use herbs, spices and vinegar instead.
- Use more fresh and frozen foods rather than processed and convenience foods.
- Salt substitutes are not recommended.

**Avoid: high salt foods >1.5g (0.6g sodium/100g)**

**Take: low salt foods <0.3g (0.1g sodium/100g)**

## Reduce the sugars in your diet

- Limit your sugar intake.
- Reduce the consumption of processed products containing refined sugars including fructose.

## Drink within sensible limits

- Maximum 14 units/week.
- Spread them over at least 3 days.



## Watch your weight

**Being overweight or obese can increase your risk of having a stroke because it can lead to high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes and high cholesterol levels**

- Carrying extra fat around your tummy gives you a higher risk of stroke.
- Losing just 5-10% of your body weight has massive health benefits.
- Seek lifestyle advice from your GP, nurse or dietitian.

## Exercise

Regular physical activity at your maximum safe capacity is important to improve your overall health, lose weight, sleep better and reduce stress.

## Fluid

To help your body work properly most people need to drink 6-8 glasses of fluid per day, preferably water.

## Supplements

There is no evidence that specific oral vitamin, mineral, stanol or sterol supplementation will reduce the risk of stroke or other vascular events.

**Public Health England recommends taking a vitamin D supplement of 10micrograms (mcg or µg) or 400 IU, a day from November to March for the general population. People over 65 should consider taking it all year round.**

## Stop smoking

Seek support and advice from your GP/doctor.

## Further information

### Stroke Association

[www.stroke.org.uk](http://www.stroke.org.uk)

### NHS Choices

[www.nhs.uk/live-well/](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/)

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/stroke/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stroke/)

### British Dietetic Association

Food fact sheets

[www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts/home](http://www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts/home)

If you would like this leaflet in large print, braille, audio version or in another language, please contact the General Office on 01872 252690

