

Reduce Your Risk of a “Brain Attack”

(NAPSA)—The numbers are grim: in the United States, someone has a stroke, or “brain attack,” every 53 seconds. Nearly 600,000 Americans suffer from strokes each year.

According to pathologist Ray Sukumar, M.D., F.C.A.P., while the death rate from stroke is declining, it is still America’s third leading cause of death. “Many of the deaths from stroke are preventable,” said Dr. Sukumar. “Controlling your diet to help reduce the chance of diabetes and reduce cholesterol, eliminating unhealthy lifestyle habits such as smoking, preventing or managing high blood pressure, and scheduling regular checkups with your physician are critical to reducing your risk of stroke.”

A stroke occurs when a blood vessel that brings oxygen and nutrients to the brain bursts or is clogged by a blood clot or some other particle. Because of this rupture or blockage, part of the brain doesn’t get the blood and oxygen it needs. Deprived of oxygen, nerve cells in the affected area of the brain can’t work and die within minutes. When nerve cells can’t work, the part of the body they control can’t work either.

Regular visits to a physician are especially important for those individuals with unavoidable risk factors, like advancing age or a family history of stroke. The risk of stroke nearly doubles after age 55 and the chance of a stroke is higher if your parents or grandparents suffered from one.

Dr. Sukumar, a physician who specializes in treating patients through laboratory medicine, says cholesterol levels, blood pressure, and other related conditions such as diabetes all put a person at a

How to Reduce Your Risk of Stroke:

- Don’t smoke.
- Eat healthy foods.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Exercise 30 minutes a day.
- Drink alcoholic beverages moderately.
- Do not use nonprescribed drugs.
- Visit your physician regularly. 

higher risk for a stroke and are only effectively diagnosed and treated by regular monitoring.

“High blood pressure is the most important risk factor for stroke. Because this and other stroke-related conditions, like high cholesterol, can often go undiagnosed, early detection is essential for stroke prevention,” said Dr. Sukumar. “Regular checkups, including appropriate blood work, can catch these problems early when they can be most effectively treated by medication and lifestyle changes.” Lowering blood pressure five points can reduce the risk of stroke by 42 percent.

Many stroke risk factors are controllable through exercise. Regular physical activity also reduces weight, which can control high blood pressure and the risk for diabetes. It controls cholesterol levels and reduces stress, which can lower your blood pressure and give you a greater sense of well-being.

Dr. Sukumar says to help live a stroke-free life: “Don’t smoke, eat plenty of fruits and vegetables, avoid fatty foods, and exercise regularly. Losing as little as ten pounds can significantly reduce your risk for stroke and improve your overall health.”