



The Brain Buzz

A UAMS NEWSLETTER FOR STROKE SURVIVORS
AND THEIR CAREGIVERS

Need Some Support?

Each week, stroke survivor Molly Schwarz visits patients at UAMS on H8 that have had a stroke. If you are interested in having her visit with you to share her experience and provide support, please let your nurse know.



Understanding Cholesterol

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So you've been admitted to the hospital and told you have had a stroke. You will be seen by a team of experts to decide why you had your stroke, how to recover from the stroke, and how to help prevent another one. One of the stroke team members will be a registered dietitian. This person will look at factors of why your stroke occurred and how they can best help you.

There are several risk factors that put a person at risk for stroke. Many of the factors can be controlled and may include:

- Being overweight and physically inactive
- Uncontrolled diabetes
- Uncontrolled high blood pressure
- Poor eating habits
- Smoking

The dietitian will look at your overall cholesterol levels, blood pressure, and weight status. They will listen to your recall of eating habits and help you determine what changes can be made to best improve your cholesterol levels. You get to decide what changes you will make to your lifestyle, but choosing to eat healthy, quitting smoking and obtaining a healthy weight are ways to improve your chances of avoiding another stroke.

The American Heart Association recommends that everyone over the age of 20 years have their cholesterol levels checked. It is good to know your numbers and what they mean.

The following are considered desirable levels:

- Cholesterol level less than 200 mg/dL
- Low Density Lipoprotein (LDL) less than 100mg/dL or less than 70mg/dL, if the patient already has diabetes or heart disease
- High Density Lipoprotein (HDL) greater than 50-60ml/dL; HDL less than 40ml/dL if there is an increased risk of heart disease.
- Triglycerides less than 150mg/dL



Understanding Cholesterol Continued.....

Lipid levels can be elevated due to family genetics, but changing to a heart healthy diet can help decrease the risk of a stroke. LDL cholesterol is considered to be “bad cholesterol” as this is the cholesterol that builds up plaque in arteries. LDL can be lowered by limiting saturated fats, animal protein, tropical oils, trans fats, excess sugars, and by cutting out smoking.

Increasing fiber can also help with lowering cholesterol. It is recommended to consume 25-35 grams of fiber a day and at least 5-10 grams of the fiber should be soluble. Soluble fibers helps to reduce LDL levels. Examples of soluble fiber containing foods are: oatmeal, dried beans and peas, apples, oranges, flax seeds and Brussels sprouts.

Products that contain plant stanols or sterols can also help to reduce LDL levels. These have been added to various margarines, salad dressings, and some oils. One example is Benecol. Some studies show that using 2-3 grams/day sterols can help lower LDL levels by 10-15%.

HDL cholesterol is considered the body’s “good cholesterol” and has a protective effect on the heart. Ways to improve HDL levels are being physically active, decreasing saturated fat intakes while increasing monounsaturated fats, quitting smoking, and keeping your weight at a healthy level.

Triglycerides are a form of stored fat found in foods and is also made by the body. Elevated triglycerides can be caused by overweight and obesity, physical inactivity, cigarette smoking, uncontrolled diabetes, excessive alcohol consumption and a diet very high in carbohydrates.

A heart healthy diet is one that includes vegetables, fruits, whole grains, low fat dairy products, lean protein sources and healthy fats. It also limits sweets, salt, and red meats. Salt should be restricted to no more than 2400mg sodium per day and if blood pressure needs to be lowered, then an intake of 1500mg sodium would be better.

Choosing items from the outer areas of the grocery store will help you arrive at healthier foods on your grocery list. You will often see fresh fruits and vegetables, lean proteins such as fish and poultry, lean dairy such as skim milk and skim yogurt in the perimeter of the store. The middle of the grocery store tends to contain more processed foods with a few exceptions.

An example of a heart healthy dinner:

- 3 ounces of grilled salmon
- ½ cup of steamed broccoli
- ½ cup of cooked wild rice
- 1 cup of spinach salad topped with raspberries, black walnuts and olive oil/vinegar dressing

Salmon recipe:

- 1 tsp ginger
- 1 tsp garlic powder or 1 minced garlic clove
- 1/3 cup low sodium soy sauce
- ¼ cup honey
- 1/3 cup orange juice
- 1 green onion chopped



Place the above ingredients in a large plastic bag and shake. Add 1 salmon fillet and let it marinate for several hours. Remove the salmon from the marinade and discard the extra marinade. Place the salmon on medium heat on a lightly oiled grill (or on a cedar plank on the grill) for 12-15 minutes per inch thickness. Salmon is done when it flakes easily with a fork.



Caregivers: Need Help After Your Loved One Has Had a Stroke?

The website provided by the American Stroke Association can help. This website provides many resources for caregivers to help you to manage the stressful time right after a stroke. Go to www.strokeassociation.org, click on "Life After Stroke" and then on "Family Caregivers." If you aren't able to access the internet, call the American Stroke Association at 1-888-4-STROKE.

"It is so important as a caregiver not to become so enmeshed in the role that you lose yourself. It's neither good for you nor your loved one."

- Dana Reeve

Refreshing the Caregiver

Source: American Stroke Association

One of the most important things you can do for yourself and your loved one is to carve out time and space for yourself. This has to be a conscious action that you take every day. It could be as simple as spending 10 minutes playing a fun computer game. If you don't learn how to take a timeout, your frustration is going to boil over. You'll be less productive and your relationship with your loved one will suffer.

-Find a way to take a 10 or 15 minute walk a couple of times a day, even if it's just around the yard.

- Choose a space in the house that is your "quiet space" where you can go take a few deep breaths, close your eyes, read a book, pray, meditate, listen to music, sing, write in your journal, talk to a friend on the phone or just rest quietly for a few minutes.

-Schedule your timeouts. Choose a time when your loved one is typically sleeping, eating, watching a TV program or seems to be at their best during the day. They will get accustomed to your little timeouts after a while and stop resenting your privacy and interrupting you.

Insist on these moments in a gentle way and reward your loved one when you've refreshed yourself.



**Need More
Information
About Stroke?**

National Stroke Association

1-800-STROKES (787-6537)

www.stroke.org

American Stroke Association

1-888-4-STROKE (478-7653)

www.strokeassociation.org

UAMS Neurology Department

501-686-5838

<http://neurology.uams.edu/>

Face drooping.

Arm weakness.

Speech difficulty.

Time to call 911.

Spot a stroke **F.A.S.T.**



StrokeAssociation.org

