

Signs of Stroke? Think F.A.S.T.

Every year, about 800,000 people suffer strokes.

A stroke happens when the blood supply to your brain is interrupted or reduced. Strokes can be devastating, but if you think F.A.S.T., then you may increase your chances of recovering, depending on the stroke's severity.

Use **F.A.S.T.** to identify the common symptoms of stroke:

Face: You try to smile and 1 side of your face droops.

Arms: You attempt to raise your arms and 1 side drops down.

Speech: You speak and you have slurred speech or your speech sounds odd.

Time: Call 911 immediately if you have 1 or more of these symptoms.



F for face



A for arms



S for speech difficulty



T for time

Other signs include: dizziness, trouble walking, trouble seeing with 1 or both eyes, confusion, numbness or weakness on 1 side.

Reduce your risk of strokes by practicing these safe habits: Get plenty of exercise (if okayed by your health care provider), manage your cholesterol levels and blood pressure, eat healthy and lose weight if you're overweight.

Eating disorders are not a lifestyle choice.

They are serious, complex and sometimes fatal illnesses that cause radical preoccupation with food. The most common forms are anorexia nervosa (eating very little), bulimia nervosa (eating followed by purging) and binge eating (anxiety-triggered overeating). The average ages of onset are 18 to 21 years old. Learn about **National Eating Disorders Awareness Week, February 23 to 29**, at nationaleatingdisorders.org.



Jump-Start Your Immunity

Everyday habits can either protect or weaken your immune system. Poor immunity can lead to chronic allergies, asthma and autoimmune disorders, including lupus, rheumatoid arthritis and type 1 diabetes.

Smoking and alcohol abuse are obvious enemies of your immune system.

Researchers have also found we weaken our defenses against germs, viruses and serious illness through many other lifestyle habits.

Poor sleep: It raises your stress hormone levels and inflammation. In general, daily sound sleep (7 to 9 hours) protects your health.

Poor diet: Not eating plenty of fruits, vegetables, nuts and seeds robs you of essential nutrients (including beta carotene as well as vitamins C and E) that strengthen immunity. Kick the junk food and eat well.

Excess sugar: Eating or drinking too much sugar reduces the immune system's ability to fight bacteria, an effect that can last for hours. Satisfy your sweet tooth with fruit and drink water instead.

Chronic stress: It triggers a steady stream of stress hormones that suppress immunity and lead to disease.

Negative attitude: Have you lost your sense of humor? Practice laughing more; it pushes back stress hormones and raises white blood cells that can curb infection.

Loneliness: Having a network of good, close friends can boost immunity by easing stress and elevating your mood.

The takeaway: **Take care of yourself.**



Exercise on the Mind

Exercise does more than boost physical fitness: It affects how you think and feel mentally. Researchers have documented how exercise impacts your brain and emotions. In fact, just 5 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise (e.g., brisk walking) can enhance mood, according to the American Psychological Association (APA).

That's because even brisk walking releases endorphins, natural chemicals produced by the nervous system which trigger a calming and feel-good effect that can help relieve depression. Exercise can also help treat and prevent anxiety and panic attacks by soothing an over-reactive nervous system, the APA notes.

Regular exercise may boost memory, too, according to University of Texas research. What's more, studies show regular aerobic workouts, over time, can improve your brain's executive function, which is home to skills needed to plan, solve problems and make decisions.

So, consider taking a walk instead of a coffee break, especially if you have a sedentary job, to lower stress levels, brighten your mood and increase your ability to focus and work well.



The **Smart Moves Toolkit**, including this issue's printable download, **Lowdown on Body Fat**, is at personalbest.com/extras/20V2tools.

2.2020