



CLASS 17 | STROKE AWARENESS WORKSHEET

Simple Lifestyle Changes that Can Lower Stroke Risk

DIRECTIONS: *This worksheet provides you with information about several steps we can all take to lower our risk for stroke. You can read over this information as a group, and discuss in general terms how we can all boost our brain's protection from stroke by making simple lifestyle changes to more closely follow the advice below. You can also take this worksheet home to review on your own or with family and friends.*

- **High Blood Pressure.** Hypertension, or high blood pressure, is a leading risk factor for stroke. However, high blood pressure can be effectively managed with a combination of lifestyle changes (exercise and diet) and medications. Have your blood pressure checked annually. If it is elevated, speak with your doctor to better understand the cause of your high blood pressure and your options for lowering it and maintaining that lowered level.
- **Smoking:** Smoking doubles the risk of stroke by damaging blood vessels, clogging arteries, and raising blood pressure. The best solution? Quit smoking. While it may seem difficult to give up the nicotine, there are numerous resources to help you stop. Check out [smokefree.gov](http://www.smokefree.gov) (www.smokefree.gov) for materials, referrals and more to get you started.
- **Healthy Weight:** Being overweight or obese significantly increases your risk of stroke (as well as dementia). Obesity is a significant health issue in the U.S. If weight is an issue for you, check out the "Aim for a Healthy Weight" resources from the NIH. (http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/lose_wt/index.htm).
- **Aerobic Exercise:** Aside from helping you lose weight and lowering blood pressure, exercise by itself reduces your risk of stroke. Look to participate in aerobic activities at least 4-5 times a week.
- **Diabetes Management:** The side effects of diabetes include damaged blood vessels that can increase the risk of having a stroke. If you have been diagnosed with Diabetes, it is important to keep this condition under control through lifestyle management, medications and monitoring.
- **Baby Aspirin:** The Women's Health Initiative found that women over 65 who take baby aspirin once a day significantly reduce their risk of a stroke. Talk with your physician about whether you would be a good candidate for a daily dose of baby aspirin.