

UNDERSTANDING EXERCISE AND STROKE.



Stroke happens either when the blood supply to part of your brain is cut off because of a blood clot, or because a brain artery ruptures and leads to a haemorrhage. Stroke is a leading cause of death and disability worldwide, but most strokes can be prevented by addressing a small number of key risk factors.

1 million strokes a year are linked to physical inactivity, by getting the recommended amount of exercise each week you will reduce your risk of having a stroke.



HOW DOES EXERCISE REDUCE STROKE RISK?

Just 30 minutes of exercise five times a week can reduce your risk of stroke by 25%.

Exercise plays an important role in reducing several stroke risk factors including hypertension, diabetes, cholesterol, depression and stress. By getting regular exercise you can take action on a number of stroke risk factors.

HOW MUCH EXERCISE DO I NEED?

You should be as active as you possibly can in your daily life – small everyday activities like walking instead of taking the car, taking the stairs instead of the elevator, gardening and housework will help you to stay healthy and reduce your stroke risk.

In addition to keeping generally active, it is recommended that we all aim for at least 2½ hours a week of moderate to vigorous exercise each week. You can divide this up however you like, but a good way to achieve this target is to be active 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week. If you find it hard to schedule half an hour a day, or find it hard to exercise for 30 minutes in one session, it's OK to break this down into blocks of 10 minutes or more throughout your day and work up over time.

IF I AM UNFIT ISN'T THERE A RISK THAT EXERCISE COULD CAUSE A STROKE?

It is very unlikely that exercising at the recommended levels will cause a stroke. However, if you haven't been active for some time, have a condition that increases your risk of stroke or are on medication you should speak to a health professional.

SHOULD I EXERCISE IF I'VE ALREADY HAD A STROKE?

If you are a stroke survivor, regular exercise can reduce your risk of having another stroke, your risk of developing dementia, improve your recovery, help with fatigue and improve your general well-being. Even if your mobility is affected by stroke, there is likely to be some kind of exercise that works for you. A physiotherapist or occupational therapist should be able to help you find exercise that works for you.

1 in 4 people are at risk of stroke in their lifetime, but by taking simple steps almost all strokes can be prevented. For more information on stroke risks and prevention visit www.worldstrokecampaign.org

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