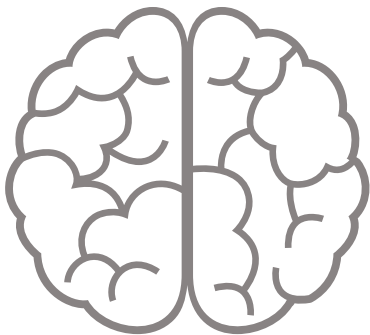


A MONTHLY HEALTHLETTER FROM THE WELLNESS COUNCIL OF AMERICA



## DETECTING A SILENT STROKE

Did you know that you could have a stroke without even knowing it? These strokes are often referred to as “silent strokes”. Like a typical stroke, silent strokes cause brain damage and are caused by a loss of blood supply to the brain. However, with a silent stroke you may not have any clearly recognizable symptoms.

A brain scan performed by your doctor is the only way to determine if you’ve experienced a silent stroke. If you have a family history of stroke or notice that you’ve been experiencing unexplained memory, thinking and/or movement problems see your doctor to determine if you should be evaluated for stroke. A few silent strokes could lead to more severe strokes, so the sooner a condition is eliminated or diagnosed, the better your odds of preventing further damage.

# STOP A *stroke*

A stroke is a sudden stop of blood supply to the brain. Sound frightening? That’s because it is. To be sure, in mere minutes a stroke could change your life, causing memory and cognitive loss and physical debilitation.

## 4 THINGS YOU CAN DO NOW

The good news is that you can do a lot to lower your chances of having a stroke or preventing another if you’ve already had one. Although you can’t control every factor that increases your odds (age, family history, gender) there are several key items you can keep in check to greatly reduce your chances of having a stroke.

**1 Know your blood pressure and cholesterol levels.** High blood pressure is a leading cause of stroke, so knowing your numbers is the first and perhaps most important step to help prevent a stroke. An optimal blood pressure is anything at or below 120/80 mm Hg. Talk and work with your doc if your blood pressure is not in this range.

High blood cholesterol also puts you at an increased risk for stroke. An ideal total cholesterol is less than 200mg/dL. Everyone over the age of 20 should have their cholesterol measured at least once every five years.

**2 Do everything you can to quit smoking if you smoke.** Research shows that cigarette smoking is another top risk factor for stroke. The nicotine, carbon monoxide and other chemicals in cigarettes damage your cardiovascular system, increasing the odds of stroke. Your doctor can prescribe treatments to help you quit.

**3 Choose monosaturated fats over the saturated kind.** Diets high in saturated and trans fats, which can be found in red meats, lard, cream and processed foods can raise blood cholesterol levels. Moderate amounts of monosaturated fats on the other hand can actually help keep your cholesterol in check and are found in vegetable oils, nuts, seeds and some fish.

**4 Get moving.** Something as simple as a daily brisk walk can decrease your risk. Try to get a total of at least 30 minutes of activity on most or all days.

SEE "IGNITING YOUR BEST YOU!" FOR 16 STELLAR WAYS TO CUT YOUR RISK OF STROKE.



This recipe is great on the weekends when you have a little more time to make breakfast!

**INGREDIENTS:**

1/2 CUP ALMOND FLOUR

2/3 CUP OLD FASHIONED OATS

2 OMEGA-3 EGGS

1 RIPE BANANA

4 OUNCES PLAIN YOGURT

1/2 TSP. BAKING POWDER

1 TSP. VANILLA

3/4 CUP FROZEN BLUEBERRIES

PINCH OF SALT

**DIRECTIONS:**

Combine everything except for the blueberries in a blender and blend for two minutes. After the batter is smooth, gently fold in the blueberries. Spoon about 2 ounces of the batter per pancake on a hot skillet sprayed with pan-spray. Cook until lightly-browned on both sides.

**SERVES:** 4



**Dr. Ann**  
Ann Kulze, M.D.

With formal training in nutrition and medicine, plus hands-on experience as a mother of four and family physician, Dr. Ann is a unique nutrition expert for the real world.

The whole food ingredients found in Dr. Ann's recipes are the right foods for health and vitality. Nutritional excellence naturally follows.

For more, visit [DrAnnWellness.com](http://DrAnnWellness.com).

# Oatmeal Pancakes



**SUPERSTAR  
FOOD OF THE  
MONTH  
OATMEAL**

A study published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* gives us all more reasons to eat more whole grains like oatmeal. Investigators from Penn State University placed 50 obese adults with at least one risk factor for heart disease on a calorie restricted diet for 12 weeks. Half of the group was instructed to consume whole grains such as oatmeal as part of their calorie trimming plan, while the rest were told to go for refined grains. At the end of the study, both groups were

successful in losing weight but the whole grain group experienced a 38% reduction in their average CRP level in addition to losing more belly fat. CRP is a universal marker for low-grade inflammation in the lining of arteries and like belly fat is linked to both heart attacks and strokes. This study was particularly important because it was the first clinical trial to show that a low calorie diet, high in whole grains, can result in weight loss while simultaneously reducing the risk of chronic diseases.



# GO STEALTH

## with Your Fruits & Veggies

We could all probably incorporate more fruits and vegetables into our daily diet—but much easier said than done, right?! If you find it difficult to add this food group into your meals and snacks, try these tried and true strategies:

### **Shred your veggies.**

Finely chop carrots, zucchini, cabbage, broccoli, etc. and add them to virtually any entrée for added flavor and texture (and not to mention fiber, vitamins and minerals). Try it with meatloaf, spaghetti sauce, and lasagna and baked goods like muffins. If you don't have the time to slice and dice, look for packaged pre-shredded veggies in the produce section.

**Add canned pumpkin or sweet potato puree to your dishes.** Both are high in fiber and loaded with vitamin A and other carotenoids. Try adding a can to soups, baked goods (like breads and muffins) or pancakes. A few scoops of canned pumpkin or sweet potato puree are also great with plain or vanilla yogurt.

### **Mix in leafy greens to stews or smoothies.**

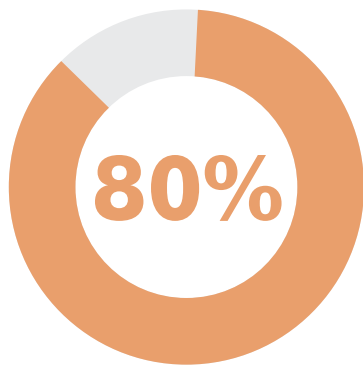
Kale, collard greens and spinach are just a few leafy greens that make a wonderful addition to soups, stews and smoothies. This may be a particularly ideal option if you don't like the taste of greens. When added to these dishes, you can barely taste them!

**Add a healthy protein to any veggie or fruit for a delicious snack.** Plain 'ol celery sticks probably won't curb your cravings or satisfy your hunger. Add some almond or peanut butter to them though, and now you're talking. Indeed, you can turn ordinary fruits and vegetables into satisfying, sweet, and/or salty crunchy snacks by simply adding a healthy protein. Experiment to your heart's content—carrots with hummus or strawberries with yogurt are just a few examples to get you started.





# spark16... SIMPL HEART ATTACK



Up to **80 percent** of strokes are preventable by working to manage personal risk.

THE NATIONAL STROKE ASSOCIATION



**1** **Take four brisk 30-minute walks a week.** A study that tracked exercising habits of more than 39,000 women found that just two hours of brisk walking a week decreased stroke risk by 37 percent.

**2** **Enjoy a handful of fresh or frozen cherries.** Research finds that the phytochemicals that give cherries their rich scarlet color can also help to lower levels of uric acid in blood. High uric acid is a risk factor for heart attacks and stroke.

**3** **Replace the bread basket with veggies and hummus when dining out.** Refined (white) bread and rolls are the top sources of sodium in the American diet, and a high-sodium diet could increase your chances of developing high blood pressure (a primary risk factor for stroke).

**4** **Limit or completely avoid processed foods that contain trans-fats.** Researchers from the University of North Carolina found that women who consumed seven grams of trans fat each day had 30 percent more stroke incidents than those who ate one gram. Trans-fats are commonly found in processed foods, and are referred to as partially hydrogenated oils on the ingredients list.

**5** **Go Mediterranean.** Several studies indicate that a Mediterranean-inspired diet, which revolves around eating lots of vegetables, whole grains, fish, olive oil, nuts and seeds, and very little red meat and sweets can lower stroke risk.

**6** **Do everything you can to control your diabetes if you have it.** Diabetes greatly increases the likelihood of a stroke. Work closely with your doctor to control your blood sugar and keep close tabs on your cholesterol and blood pressure—maintaining optimal ranges for both is extremely important for people with diabetes.

**7** **Go to the bathroom the moment you feel the urge.** Scientists at Taiwan University concluded that “holding it” can actually put added stress on your coronary arteries, possibly making you more vulnerable to heart attack.

**8** **Eat some beans every week.** Researchers at Tulane University found that people who ate beans four times a week reduced their risk of heart disease by 22 percent.

# THE WAYS TO SLASH & STROKE RISK

Remember to talk with your doctor if you have any concerns about your health.

**9** Try to lose two to five pounds if you're overweight. Extra weight can strain the entire circulatory system. Losing even a few pounds and keeping it off can lower your blood pressure and other stroke risk factors.

**10** Have some high-fiber cereal. Data published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* found that those who regularly ate high-fiber cereal were less likely to suffer a coronary event like a heart attack.

**11** Don't have more than two alcoholic drinks a day. According to findings published in the journal *Stroke*, those who average more than two drinks a day have a 34 percent higher risk of stroke compared to those whose daily average amounts to less than half a drink.

**12** Talk to your doctor if you're sleeping more than 10 hours a night. Most people don't get the recommended 7 to 9, so this isn't an issue. But more than 10 hours a day is linked to increased stroke risk according to a study published in *Neurology*.

**13** Complete a quick online assessment to determine your risk. The American Stroke Association offers an assessment to help you understand your current level of cardiovascular health and provides resources and information to help you reach your health goals. Find it at [www.powertoendstroke.org](http://www.powertoendstroke.org).

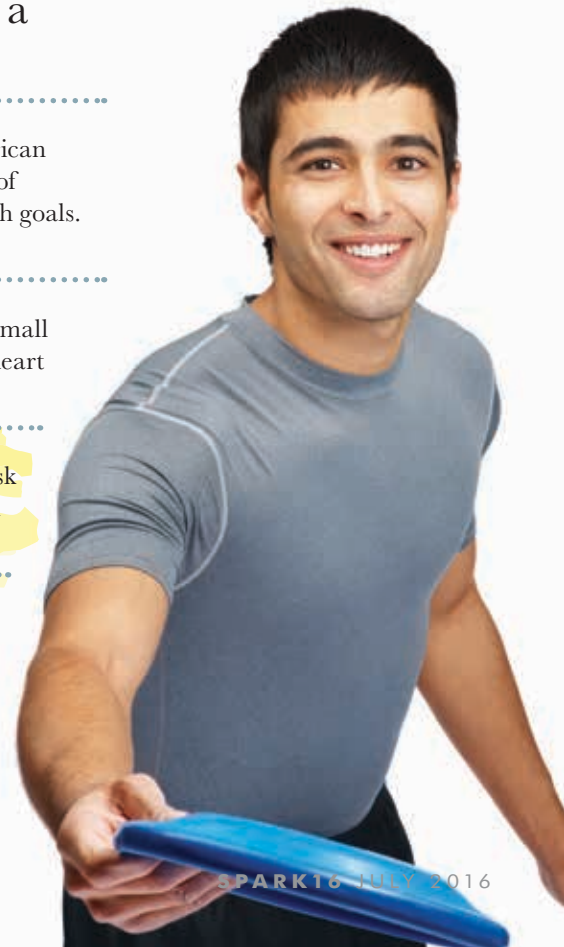
**14** Have dark chocolate a few times a week. Some studies have found that a small square of dark chocolate a few times a week could reduce your risk of developing heart disease and stroke.

**15** Get a dental check-up. Believe it or not, going to the dentist can lower your risk of heart attack and stroke. Your dentist may spot signs of heart disease like swollen gums or loose teeth before your regular doc could.

**16** Try to do something that gives you pleasure every day. Researchers at the University of Texas Medical Branch found that older adults who maintained good moods and a positive outlook benefited from reduced risk of stroke as compared to their less happy counterparts.



Some studies indicate that losing as little as **5 to 10 percent** of your starting weight (if you're overweight) can lower your blood pressure and other stroke risk factors.

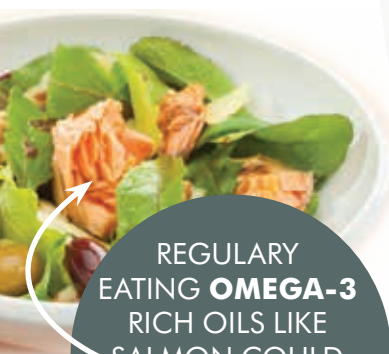


PREVENT  
PARKINSON'S?

There is no known, single way to prevent Parkinson's disease. However, some studies suggest that certain lifestyle behaviors such as eating a healthy diet and exercising can reduce your chance of developing the disease.

Research has shown that people who regularly eat fruits and vegetables, fish and omega-3 rich oils may have some protection against Parkinson's. Other studies have indicated that caffeine found in coffee and tea may reduce the risk of developing Parkinson's disease.

Additionally, several prospective studies that followed tens of thousands of people for many years have shown a correlation between exercise earlier in life and a reduced chance of developing Parkinson's later on.



REGULARY  
EATING **OMEGA-3**  
RICH OILS LIKE  
SALMON COULD  
PROTECT YOU  
AGAINST  
PARKINSON'S

SPOTTING THE TELLTALE SIGNS OF

# Parkinson's

Parkinson's disease is a brain disorder that slowly affects one's ability to move and speak. Although Parkinson's is not a fatal disease, it can lead to serious complications. In fact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention places complications from Parkinson's as the 14th leading cause of death in the U.S.

Currently, there is no cure for Parkinson's, but the earlier it's detected the better, as you can work with your doctor to manage symptoms and slow the disease's progression.

Here are some common and early warning signs that you might have the disease. Don't panic if you have experienced any of these signs, but do consider talking to your doctor to rule out or possibly diagnose the disease.

**Unexplained twitching or shaking.** Exercising or being on certain medications can cause trembling, but a slight shaking in your hands, arms and/or legs when you're relaxing could be an early sign of Parkinson's.

**Loss of smell.** If you're suffering from a cold or allergies, it's normal to temporarily lose some sense of smell, but if there is no underlying condition and you've noticed you can't smell strong aromas like curry, spices and/or perfume, you should ask your doctor about Parkinson's disease.

**Chronic stiffness and difficulty moving.** If you don't suffer from arthritis or aren't sore from exercise or an injury, but still always feel stiff (especially in the shoulder, arms and hips) talk to your doc. Those suffering from Parkinson's sometimes find that they can't swing their arms when they walk and/or find simple movements like walking or reaching for an item difficult.

**Difficulty with bowel movements.** Occasional constipation is normal and can usually be treated with dietary changes. However, if you eat a healthy diet with adequate fiber, but still find that you strain to pass a bowel movement, talk to your doctor.

**Frequent dizziness or fainting.** Getting up from a chair too quickly or over-exertion from an activity can cause a moment or two of dizziness, and is normal. However, if you regularly feel light headed, see your doctor.



# THE BEST EXERCISES YOU CAN EVER DO...

## NO MATTER YOUR AGE OR FITNESS LEVEL!

Truth be told, any physical activity provides health benefits—and that includes just getting up out of your chair to move around for a few minutes. But if you're wondering what exercises are truly beneficial, take note of the four workouts below. In addition to protecting you from disease, these moves will help keep your weight under control, increase and tone muscle, strengthen your bones, protect your joints and may even make you smarter!



### WALKING.

Walking can be done anytime, anywhere. It's a low impact activity, meaning there's a very low chance that you'll get injured. The health benefits, however, are high—walking can help you maintain a healthy weight, improve cholesterol levels, strengthen bones, keep blood pressure in check and improve your mood. Aim for at least 30 minutes of walking a day (you can break this into multiple, smaller walks if you want). Keep in mind that the faster, farther and more frequently you walk the greater the benefits.



### RESISTANCE TRAINING.

Any weight-bearing exercise, such as lifting free weights or using your own weight (i.e., push-ups, pull-ups) can help you build and maintain critical muscle mass. Light weight training will help you look sleek, not bulky. Moreover, weight training can help you torch more calories so it's easier to maintain your weight. Aim for 10 to 15 minutes of strength training a week.

#### LIFT YOUR WAY TO A BETTER BRAIN?

Research published in *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise* found that resistance training increases blood flow to the brain and increases levels of a specific protein that protects and promotes the survival of brain neurons.



### SWIMMING

Swimming is a fantastic workout and especially great if you suffer from arthritis or are recovering from an injury to your knee, ankle or back. Swimming can improve your flexibility and strength, build endurance and can help you build muscle mass (the water acts as a resistance force). It's two workouts (cardiovascular and resistance) built into one!



### YOGA

There are several practices and variations of yoga, but all focus on bringing harmony to your mind, body and spirit through deep breathing and movement. A number of studies have shown that yoga can help reduce stress and anxiety. It can also enhance your mood and overall sense of well-being. If you're new to yoga, you may want to take a class or two to learn proper form and technique. You can find classes at your local YMCA, health club or community center.

## EXERCISE OUTSIDE, HELP THE PLANET?

Some studies have shown that people have lower levels of cortisol (a stress hormone) after exercising outside as compared to getting activity inside. Researchers speculate that the exposure to sunlight, fresh air and natural surroundings can help improve mood and make exercise more enjoyable. And if you wanted another reason to get moving outdoors, consider this: you could be helping the environment. When you take a bike ride, walk or jog outside you are not utilizing any fossil fuels or energy sources as you would if you were working out in a gym. To be sure, operating gyms and all the equipment in them takes energy. Of course, if you prefer to exercise indoors or at a gym, by all means continue to do so, and don't let this be an obstacle to your workout. Just know that when or if you do exercise outside there is an added benefit of conserving energy!



## IN THIS ISSUE



**HOW TO SNEAK MORE FRUITS & VEGGIES INTO YOUR DIET**

**WHAT YOU CAN DO TO CUT YOUR STROKE RISK TODAY**

**THE 4 BEST EXERCISES FOR ANY AGE AND FITNESS LEVEL**

**HOW TO SPOT THE TELLTALE SIGNS OF PARKINSON'S**

## DID YOU KNOW?

**80 PERCENT**

UP TO 80 PERCENT OF **STROKES** ARE PREVENTABLE BY WORKING TO MANAGE PERSONAL RISK.

**14<sup>TH</sup>**

COMPLICATIONS FROM **PARKINSON'S** DISEASE ARE THE 14<sup>TH</sup> LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH IN THE U.S.

**10-15 MINUTES**

AIM FOR **10 TO 15 MINUTES** OF STRENGTH TRAINING A WEEK.



## Can You Spot a Stroke?

It's vitally important to know the signs of a stroke as immediate treatment can prove to be life-saving. A stroke is a medical emergency, and if you or someone you know shows any of the signs below you should call 9-1-1 and get to the hospital as quickly as you can.

- Sudden droopiness in the face (if the person can't smile or smile evenly, they may have just had a stroke.)
- Severe numbness or weakness in one arm or leg
- Slurred speech, or saying things that don't make any sense
- Abrupt loss of vision, strength and/or balance
- Brief loss of consciousness
- Unexplained dizziness or sudden falls

Remember, it's important to seek immediate medical attention if you or someone you know experiences any of these symptoms (even if they go away).

## WHAT'S IN A NUMBER?



**30 MINUTES**

30 minutes of physical activity a day like walking can help keep your weight, blood pressure and cholesterol levels in check, and thereby reduce your odds of having a stroke later in life.



**30 MINUTES**

The amount of time it could take to do normal, routine activities that once took seconds or a few minutes (like getting dressed or going up a flight of stairs) if you've suffered a serious stroke. Some strokes can hinder or completely take away your mobility.