Mediterranean Style

Reduce Your Stroke Risk

By: Rosalind Elemy, MA, RD and Barbra Sassower, MPH, RD, CDE

After the age of 55, the chance of having a stroke nearly doubles for each decade of life. The good news is that medical studies suggest that by making simple lifestyle changes, you may be able to reduce your risk of having a stroke. By making healthy food selections,you may be able to reduce your risk of having a stroke by as much as 60 percent.

Healthy food choices can reduce the risk of developing chronic diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, obesity and heart disease — all of which increase the risk of having a stroke.

Limiting your intake of saturated fat, trans-fat and cholesterol, watching salt intake, and avoiding excess calories (from sugar and alcohol) are all positive lifestyle changes that may lower your risk of having a stroke. Choosing a variety of foods is the best way to make sure your diet is protective against stroke. Adopting a Mediterranean-style diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, and healthy fats like olive oil and fish rich in omega-3 fatty acids may have protective benefits.

Research also shows that a diet containing five or more servings of fruits and vegetables may reduce the risk of stroke. So, start making positive changes in your diet now. “Research also shows that a diet containing five or more servings of fruiSo, start making positive changes in your diet now.ts and vegetables may reduce the risk of stroke.”

Incorporate at least two servings of fruits or vegetables at each meal. Selecting fruits and vegetables high in potassium content and limiting dietary sodium may help to lower blood pressure. Good sources of potassium are melons, citrus fruits, tomatoes, spinach and broccoli.

Add legumes to your diet — there are so many varieties — navy beans, garbanzos, lima beans, lentils, kidney beans, pinto beans, to name a few. Legumes are flavorful and an excellent source of fiber. Legumes are also very versatile, and can be used in salads, soups, appetizers, dips, side dishes or as a vegetarian main dish.

Try new grains to add variety. Instead of white rice or pasta at meals, try whole wheat couscous, quinoa, barley, millet, and amaranth.

Replace fats that are high in saturated fat and cholesterol (butter and fats that are high in trans-fats, such as margarine), with vegetable oils, such as olive oil, that are “unsaturated” and liquid at room temperature.

Be creative with seasoning to decrease the use of salt. Try adding herbs and spices such as garlic, turmeric, ginger, and rosemary to bring zest to your dishes. Increasing your intake of fruits and vegetables is easy. Try roasting your vegetables!

WINTER ROASTED VEGETABLES

1/2 pound parsnips, peeled
1/2 pound sweet potatoes, peeled
1/2 pound butternut squash, peeled
1/2 pound carrots
1/2 pound turnips
1 red onion
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
1 teaspoon paprika
1 teaspoon turmeric
3/4 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon black pepper, freshly ground
3 Tablespoons olive oil

Preheat the oven to 450º.
Cut vegetables into medium size pieces, about one inch cubes.
Combine the vegetables in a bowl with the garlic, paprika,
turmeric, salt, pepper and olive oil.
Transfer to a baking dish and roast for 30 to 35 minutes or until tender.
Serves 12.

NUTRITIENTS PER SERVING

94 calories, 3.6 g fat, 1.2 g protein, 15.2 g carbohydrates

Healthy Living is a publication of Eisenhower Medical Center · © Copyright 2014 All Rights Reserved · www.emc.org