

After new research reveals  
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strokes are  
preventable**  
we launch our campaign  
to prevent stroke.

CAMPAIGN AGAINST STROKE ♥

# CAMPAIGN AGAINST STROKE

This summer, an important new study found that nine out of 10 strokes could be prevented. The INTERSTROKE study, published in the well-known scientific journal, *The Lancet*, included 27,000 people in 32 countries around the world. By comparing the lifestyles of people who've had a stroke and people who haven't, the researchers revealed the top 10 risk factors for stroke – including high blood pressure, smoking, an unhealthy diet and lack of exercise.

Strokes are a major health problem in the UK. Every year around 110,000 people in England have a stroke. It's the third biggest cause of death after cancer and heart disease. Although it's shocking to think of the number of strokes that could have been prevented, it's heartening to know that 90% of strokes could be prevented in the future. That's why in 2017 we're going to

launch a UK-wide campaign to let people know they can lower their risk of stroke, and how.

Of the ten risk factors highlighted by the study, high blood pressure was the most important. Although it's not widely known, high blood pressure is responsible for roughly 60% of all strokes. This means at least six in ten strokes could be prevented if blood pressure alone was managed to a healthy level.

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As high blood pressure has no symptoms, it is known as the silent killer, and often the first symptom of high blood pressure is a stroke. One of the simplest ways to lower blood pressure is through a healthy diet including eating less salt, and being active. We want to reach the millions of people who don't know they have high blood pressure and nudge them towards getting their blood pressure checked and taking steps to improve their health.

## Our campaign

We're going to launch our stroke prevention campaign during Salt Awareness Week in March 2017

We want to raise awareness of high blood pressure and the health problems it causes – in particular, that it's the single biggest risk factor for stroke. Making the consequences of high blood pressure known could resonate more with people than focusing on high blood pressure alone, inspiring people to change the way they approach their health.



## How we're going to start

**Team** up with other charities to get the message to as many people as possible.

**Work** with food companies and celebrity chefs to develop low salt menus and recipes for Salt Awareness Week.

**Launch** our Cook Challenge to encourage bake-off style competitions in workplaces around the country, where staff compete to see who can cook the tastiest meals, using LoSalt or no salt at all.

**Make** the most of Caribbean flavours by working with chefs and nutritionists to produce

recipes and offer advice. So people can create popular Caribbean meals at home – without the salt.

**Create** a user-friendly guide to eating less salt, covering the foods that are high and low in salt, and tips on reducing salt intake.

**Make** high blood pressure front page news, demonstrating the little known effects of high salt intake and high blood pressure with news stories that capture the imagination.

We want to reach the millions of people who don't know they have high blood pressure and nudge them towards getting their blood pressure checked.

# 10 WAYS TO LOWER YOUR RISK OF STROKE

We can't change our genes, our age or our gender, but we can still take control of our health. Here's how you can take on the 10 risk factors for stroke, one by one.

## 1 Look after your blood pressure

High blood pressure is the main preventable cause of stroke. The NHS uses 140/90mmHg as a cut-off point, but there could be added benefits of aiming for 120 systolic. For every 10mmHg drop in systolic blood pressure, you can lower your risk of coronary heart disease by 20% and heart failure by 28%.

Being active lowers blood pressure by keeping your heart and arteries in good condition, and being the right weight lowers blood pressure because your heart doesn't have to work so

hard. One of the simplest changes you can make is eating less salt, as well as more fruit and vegetables and watching how much alcohol you drink. Find out more from [www.bloodpressureuk.org](http://www.bloodpressureuk.org) or call 020 7882 6255.

## 2 Stop smoking

Kicking the habit brings health benefits straight away, no matter how long you've smoked for. You'll lower your blood pressure,

breathe more easily, feel fitter and be able to taste more. You're four times more likely to quit for good if you have help, and there's lots of help available.

There are free, local, face-to-face Stop Smoking Services all around the country, as well as phone and online chat. Plus there are a range of products and medicines available to curb your cravings such as e-cigarettes, nicotine patches and inhalers, as well as Quit Kits, →





e-cigarettes, nicotine patches and inhalers, as well as Quit Kits, mobile phone apps and email and text support. Find out more online from [quitnow.smokefree.nhs.uk](http://quitnow.smokefree.nhs.uk) or call the Smokefree National Helpline on 0300 123 1044, or visit your GP.

**3 Watch what you drink**  
Alcohol has a surprisingly big impact on blood pressure – it's linked to a fifth of cases of high blood pressure. Be aware of how much you drink, and try to cut back if you often have more than 14 units a week. That's the same as six pints of average strength beer or 10 small glasses of low-strength wine.

There are easy ways you can cut back on alcohol without cutting it out completely. For example, try having a couple of alcohol-free days every week, swap strong beers for weaker ones, choose bottles instead of pints or a small glass instead of a large one. Drinking less is good for your heart, liver, blood pressure and your risk of stroke, and it could improve your mood and help you sleep better so you wake up full of beans. There is support available if you need it. Visit [www.nhs.uk/Livewell/alcohol/](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/alcohol/) or your GP, or call Drinkline for free on 0300 123 1110.

**4 Find out if you have type 2 diabetes**  
Like high blood pressure, diabetes is a silent killer – as it has no symptoms. In fact, 5 million people have diabetes and don't know about it, so they aren't getting the treatment they need to prevent problems later in life, including sight loss, kidney problems and stroke. A free NHS health check is a good way to find out if you have diabetes or the early signs of it. And just like lowering high blood pressure, being a healthy weight, eating well and being active can lower your risk of type two diabetes. Visit [www.nhs.uk/Tools/Pages/Diabetes.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/Tools/Pages/Diabetes.aspx) to see if you're at risk of diabetes, or visit your GP.

**5 Eat well**  
Eat less than 6g of salt a day for the simplest way to lower your blood pressure and your risk of stroke. Most of the salt we eat is already in the foods we buy, like bread, breakfast cereal, sandwiches, sauces and soups, so check the labels to find the best options, or use our FoodSwitch app which compares products for you. Keep an eye on foods high in sugar and saturated fat too – they both add calories but very few nutrients, leading to weight gain, high cholesterol and diabetes.

It's not all about cutting out foods, but about adding in lots of wholegrains and fresh, frozen or tinned fruit and vegetables as well. It can be cheaper, easier and more fun than you think. Find a whole range of tips and recipes from our website and [www.nhs.uk/livewell](http://www.nhs.uk/livewell)

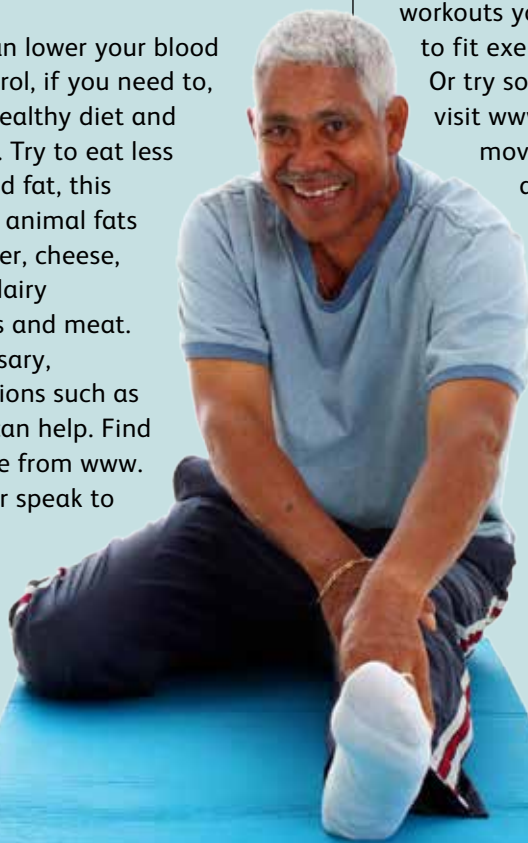


**6 Lower high blood cholesterol**  
For every 1mmol/L reduction in total cholesterol, you could lower your risk of heart disease and stroke by a quarter. Fats and sugars in the food we eat are repackaged into blood cholesterol by the liver. It's normal and healthy to have cholesterol in your blood, but too much can raise your risk of stroke and heart disease.

You can lower your blood cholesterol, if you need to, with a healthy diet and exercise. Try to eat less saturated fat, this includes animal fats like butter, cheese, full fat dairy products and meat. If necessary, medications such as statins can help. Find out more from [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) or speak to your GP.

**7 Get active**  
It's never too late to get active and there is lots of help available. Couch to 5K is a plan to help absolute beginners gradually build up to running five kilometers. Have a look at [www.nhs.uk/couchto5k](http://www.nhs.uk/couchto5k)

You could also take up the 10,000 Steps Challenge, where you aim to walk 10,000 steps every day, or go for 10 minute workouts you can do at home to fit exercise into your day. Or try something new. Just visit [www.nhs.uk/oneyou/moving](http://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/moving) for ideas. As well as preventing serious health problems, being active can make you feel full of energy and lift your mood too. Check with your doctor or nurse before starting a new type of exercise. They can also tell you about leisure centres and walking paths in your area.



**8****Keep to a healthy weight**

To stay as healthy as possible, your waist size should be no more than 94cm (37ins) for men, and 80cm (31.5inches) for women, and your BMI should be under 25. BMI, or Body Mass Index, is a measure of whether you're a healthy weight. You can find an online BMI calculator at [www.nhs.uk/Livewell/loseweight/Pages/BodyMassIndex.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/loseweight/Pages/BodyMassIndex.aspx) along with lots of advice on losing weight safely.

Losing weight if you need to will help to reduce your blood pressure and the risk of many other health problems including stroke. Being active and eating well are the simplest ways to get to or maintain a healthy weight and there is lots of support available. Try some of the ideas suggested here or visit your doctor or nurse.

**9****Look after your heart**

A healthy lifestyle, such as not smoking, being active and being a healthy weight can all lower your risk of heart problems, and in turn can lower your risk of stroke. Some heart problems are not linked to your lifestyle, but they can also lead to stroke. For example atrial

fibrillation and atrial flutter, where the heart beat is too fast or irregular. Atrial fibrillation often has no symptoms so you might not be aware of it. In fact, around a third of atrial fibrillation is undiagnosed.

Treatment with medications greatly reduces the risk of stroke. If everyone with atrial fibrillation at high risk of stroke received the right medications, 11,600 strokes could be prevented every year in the UK. Visit your GP to have your pulse checked and ask about the health of your heart. An NHS healthcheck can help you make sure your body's most important systems are running smoothly and spot any potential problems, and you can get personalised information on keeping yourself healthy. They're free to everyone aged between 40-74 eligible for a free health check. Read more at [www.nhs.uk/oneyou/checking#](http://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/checking#)

**10****Find ways to relax**

A bit of stress is normal and can help push you to do something new or difficult, but feeling under too much emotional or mental pressure for too long can take its toll on your health. Stress doesn't only affect your mood, but how much sleep you get and your body too. If it's not under control it can even lead to serious illnesses. Look out for the early signs of stress – like sweating, loss of appetite, headaches, poor concentration and feeling irritable or worried – so you can find ways to manage it.

Take control by learning to manage your time, finding ways to relax, talking, and exercising regularly. Mindfulness and meditation exercises and courses can lower your stress levels. Even singing and volunteering can help. To find ideas to suit you plus audioguides to boost your mood, have a look at the NHS Moodzone at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) or visit [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk) for information about mental health, and visit [www.stepchange.org](http://www.stepchange.org) if you have money worries. You can also visit your GP.

