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5 Food Swaps to Reduce Your Risk of Stroke



As obesity continues to rise, so too does the incidence of stroke. But we can all do our bit to counteract this threat to our health by eating a diet full of fruit and vegetables, and by maintaining a healthy weight. Here are a few top tips on what to eat to lower your risk of heart disease and/or stroke.

1. Swap beef for low-fat turkey

Reducing the amount of fat you eat, especially the saturated kind, is associated with a lower risk of stroke (1). Avoid all the obvious foods such as butter, cheese, cakes and curry, and make a few simple swaps. For instance, using turkey mince instead of beef in your spaghetti Bolognese will help to reduce calories and fat content.

2. Swap crisps for cholesterol-busting nuts

High cholesterol and obesity go hand in hand. Cholesterol is produced naturally by the body but is also found in many of the snacks we love to eat. It's always worth having a few healthy snacks in at home, to help you resist the usual temptations. Unsalted nuts, such as walnuts and hazelnuts, are a good alternative to crisps, as they contain monounsaturated fats which are associated with a lower risk of stroke (2).

3. Swap tomato ketchup for a low-salt sauce

Studies show that diets low in sodium, such as the Mediterranean and DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diets, are likely to reduce stroke risk (3). Many of the processed foods we eat contain high quantities of salt - but most of the time, you'll find low-salt alternatives in your local supermarket. Swapping condiments, such as tomato ketchup, soy sauce and mustard for healthier options is an easy way to reduce the amount of salt you eat.

4. Swap sweetened drinks for low-sugar varieties

We've all read the reports about popular fizzy drinks being laden with sugar - some containing as many as 13 teaspoons per 330ml can. Sugar-sweetened drinks containing caffeine not only make you put on weight, but also have a negative effect on your brain, and have been linked to stroke and dementia (4). Changing your favourite beverage to a sugar-free alternative will help to control your weight and reduce your risk of health problems.

5. Swap fatty meat for healthy vegetables

If you want to lose weight, eating plenty of fruit and vegetables should be part of your healthy eating plan. As well as being naturally low in fat, the more you consume, the more beneficial nutrients you receive, including potassium, magnesium and fibre which may lower your risk of heart disease and stroke (3). You could try swapping one of your meat-based meals each week to a vegetarian alternative, as a low intake of animal protein has also been linked with a decreased stroke risk (5).

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