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## 6 Foods Influencing Stroke Risk



Among all impacts on the risk factors, changing your eating habits is one of the easiest ways to decrease your risk, as it is directly related to other catalysts, such as being overweight and having high blood pressure.

In general, advice from medical professionals leans towards a diet rich in fruit

and vegetables and low in saturated fats. But within this there are certain foods, food groups and dietary patterns that can significantly increase or decrease your risk of stroke. Here's a quick overview of the important ones:

### **1. Fruit and vegetables reduce stroke risk by up to 13%**

Several studies have indicated that following a Mediterranean style diet is closely associated with reduced stroke risk. This, in part, means eating five or more pieces of fruit or vegetables a day. Groups who ate the highest quantities of these foods had the lowest stroke risk - by as much as 13% (1).

### **2. Citrus fruits and vegetables reduce stroke risk**

Whilst fruit and vegetables are also rich in a wide range of micronutrients and antioxidants, it's Vitamin C that is directly linked with a reduction in risk. Furthermore, it's important that this water-soluble vitamin is absorbed from food, rather than supplements, to have any tangible benefits. One study found that citrus fruits, hard fruits (such as apples and pears, bananas, fruiting vegetables and root vegetables) lowered stroke risk (1).

### **3. Olive oil is linked with a reduced risk of stroke**

Olive oil has become a popular alternative to butter and offers many health benefits, not least of which is related to stroke. Apolipoprotein found in olive oil is thought to play a key role in reducing heart attack and stroke as it is believed to help prevent the build-up of fats, cholesterol and other substances on the artery walls (2).

### **4. Artificially sweetened drinks increase stroke risk**

Sugar has hit the headlines in recent years due to the rise in obesity, especially in younger people, worldwide. Consuming less sugary foods not only helps to control weight and manage diabetes; it also lowers your risk of stroke. In contrast to this,

artificially sweetened beverages, such as diet fizzy drinks, have been shown to increase the risk of heart attack and stroke (3).

### **5. Trans-fats increase stroke risk in three ways**

It makes sense that a healthy diet shouldn't be high in fat. But it's the type of fat that seems to be more crucial when it comes to stroke. Polyunsaturated fats, as found in fish oils, are widely known to reduce your risk. While high intake of trans-fats, common in cakes, pies and biscuits, have been shown to dramatically increase inflammation throughout the body, damage the inner lining of the blood vessels and raise levels of bad cholesterol, which is very harmful to the heart (4).

### **6. High intake of meat increases stroke risk**

Research shows, the more processed meat, unprocessed meat and poultry we eat, but not fish, significantly increases the risk of stroke (5). Red meat contains large amounts of saturated fat, which is linked with higher cholesterol, another risk factor for stroke. Processed meat is often manufactured with a high level of salt, which increases the risk of high blood pressure and, in turn, the probability of stroke.

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Updated February 2022

Next review 2024



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**Supported by an educational grant from**



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