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What happens during a stroke?
A stroke is a very scary thing: A vessel carrying blood to the brain becomes blocked or bursts, leaving the brain deprived of the essential oxygen and nutrients it needs to survive. In the minutes following a stroke, brain cells begin to die. Strokes is the No.1 cause of disability and the No. 4 cause of death in the United States, according to the American Stroke Association. But knowing the risk factors and symptoms of a stroke can play a huge role in reducing the potentially devastating effects.

Source: http://www.cnn.com

Types of strokes
There are two main types of strokes: ischemic and hemorrhagic, according to the stoke association. Ischemic strokes account for 87% of all stroke cases. When a blood vessel becomes blocked by fatty deposits, blood has trouble passing through the brain. An ischemic stroke is caused by this obstruction. A thrombotic ischemic stroke occurs when a blood clot forms at the blocked part of a vessel. An embolic ischemic stroke occurs when a blood clot forms at another spot in the body and travels to a vessel in the brain that’s too small to let it pass.

A hemorrhagic stroke is caused by a weakened blood vessel that ruptures and bleeds into the brain, according to the association. You may have heard of an aneurysm; an aneurysm is a sort of bubble in a vessel that can grow until it bursts. That can cause a hemorrhagic stroke.

Source: http://www.cnn.com

Stroke Symptoms
Spotting the early signs of a stroke and getting help quickly can reduce any long-term effects, the association says. “The sooner a stroke victim gets to the hospital, the sooner they’ll get treatment. And that can make a remarkable difference in their recovery, ”the ASA website states. Use the F.A.S.T acronym to identify symptoms; If you see Face drooping, Arm weakness or Speech difficulty, it’s Time to call 911. Other symptoms include sudden numbness in the legs, sudden confusion or trouble seeing dizziness or loss of balance, or a sudden headache. If you or a loved one is at high risk for a stroke, download the American Stroke Association’s new F.A.S.T. mobile app, available for iPhones and I Pads on the App store. An Android version is coming soon.

Source: http://www.cnn.com

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Stroke Risk Factors

Your diet and exercise habits play a big role in your risk for having a stroke. Remember, fatty deposits in the blood vessels cause the majority of stroke cases. High blood pressure is the leading cause of strokes.

Smoking can also play a role: Nicotine and carbon dioxide cause damage to your blood vessels, weakening them and putting you at risk of a hemorrhagic stroke.

Genetics may be a risk factor as well. Your risk of having a stroke is higher if an immediate family member has had a stroke, according to the association.

Some strokes may be symptoms of genetic disorders like CADASIL, which is caused by a gene mutation that leads to damage of blood vessel walls in the brain, blocking blood flow,” the organization’s website states.

For more information, visit:
- American Stroke Association
- National Stroke Association
- The Center for Disease Control and Prevention
- Cleveland Clinic
- The Mayo Clinic

Source: http://www.cnn.com

7 easy ways to kick start your metabolism

Adopt a few of these strategies to get the metabolism you crave – in time.

1. We all know weight-lifting builds muscle, and the more muscle you have, the more calories you burn. What you may not realize is that the calorie burn continues. Exercisers who did a 15- minute resistance routine burned 100 extra calories a day for three days afterward.

2. List first, do cardio second – Exercisers who pumped iron 20 minutes before cycling melted more fat than those who didn’t lift or those who waited longer between lifting and doing cardio. So move right from the hand weights to that bike or treadmill.

3. Spice things up- That beyond-hot mustard that comes with Asian takeout can rev your metabolism by 20 to 25%.

4. Include intervals – Cyclists who pedaled at an all-out effort with high resistance for a total of five 30-second sprints (that’s just 2.5 minutes!) burned a whopping 200 calories.

5. Guzzle H2O - it will keep your metabolism humming when you’re just bumming around. Water not your cup of tea? Freeze bits of peeled citrus fruit and use them in place of ice cubes.

6. Snack post-workout – Exercisers who drank a 250-calorie shake with 24 grams of protein and 36 grams of carbs after strength training lost about four pounds more fat and created one and a half pounds more lean muscle in six months. But it doesn’t have to be a shake; a banana with peanut butter works too - just nosh within 30 minutes after work out.

7. Yoga gets you in burn mode. In one study, participants who om’d their way through a 50 minute yoga session saw a drop in their levels of the stress hormone cortisol, which can inhibit fat burning. Start with a 10-minute circuit and work up to a longer session.

Source: http://www.cnn.com
What exactly does fiber do?

I’ve heard so much about fiber what is it, what does it do and should you eat it or avoid it?
Fiber is a plant-derived carbohydrate that cannot be digested by humans, so it passes through your system relatively intact and has little to no caloric value.

There are two types of fiber: Soluble (dissolves in water) and insoluble (does not dissolve in water). Both play an important role in optimal health and occur naturally—often together—in foods such as whole grains, fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds and beans.

Fiber acts as a natural laxative by increasing stool bulk, which allows stool to pass more readily through the colon. It can also help those with loose stools and may play a role in the management of irritable bowel syndrome. Many types of soluble fiber also act as prebiotics, feeling healthy bacteria in your gut, thereby further contributing to colon health.

Fiber, especially soluble fiber, also improves blood sugar control by slowing down the rate that food empties from your stomach, thereby delaying the rise in blood sugar after meals and preventing excess or exaggerated insulin release. Delayed stomach emptying may also help with loss by weight loss by improving hunger control. In Addition, fiber adds bulk to your diet without adding calories and helps to reduce the calories density of your diet, one of the most important strategies for long-term weight loss. Soluble fiber can help lower cholesterol, and a high-fiber diet may help reduce blood pressure, inflammation and reduce your risk of heart failure (especially fiber from whole grains).

Studies show that those with the highest intake of fiber have significantly lower risk of dying of any cause. A recently published study by the National cancer Institute that included almost 400,000 participants found that for every 10-gram increase in fiber intake, risk of death dropped 12% in men and 15% in women.

Women should consume about 25 grams of fiber per day and men should consume 38 grams. The majority of Americans get less than half the daily recommended amount of fiber. Naturally occurring fiber is generally your best bet. Many products, including cookies, crackers, drinks, sugary cereals and even ice cream, are now adding fiber to appear more healthy. In most cases, these added fibers do not have the same health benefits as naturally occurring fiber.

Aim for a variety of sources of naturally fiber-rich foods including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, seeds and brans to ensure that you get all the health benefits—along with a host of other health promoting vitamins, minerals, and phytonutrients.

Refined and highly processed grains and fruit juices are stripped of their naturally occurring fiber (and many nutrients), so it is important to choose whole foods for optimal health.

If you have trouble getting in adequate amounts of fiber daily or suffer from bowel problems or high cholesterol, talk to your doctor or registered dietitian about adding a fiber supplement to your diet.

If you don’t currently eat enough fiber, increase your fiber intake slowly to avoid unpleasant gut symptoms (such as gas and bloating) and make sure to drink plenty of water.

If you are gluten-sensitive or intolerant, there are a number of gluten free grains, including quinoa, brown rice, oats, and corn.

Source: http://www.cnn.com
Skinni Sipping - The best and worst beverages for weight

Many of us watch what we eat but not what we drink when on a diet. That's a mistake. The average American gets a fifth of daily calories from beverages. Choosing the right drinks can tweak your metabolism, curb your appetite, and reduce your total calorie count, which drinks are spoilers and which are helpers on the path to weight loss.

**Spoiler: Soda** - Every time you chug a bottle of soda, you’re consuming hundreds of empty calories. Switching to diet soft drinks is an obvious way to cut calories, but the research is mixed on whether this switch results in weight loss. Some studies show a short-term benefit. Others find diet soda drinkers gain weight. If your calorie intake exceeds what you burn off, just switching to diet soda may not do the trick.

**Helper: Water** - Replacing carbonated soft drinks with water will cut hundreds of calories per day, and the benefits don’t stop there. Drinking two glasses of water before a meal may encourage the stomach to feel full more quickly, so you don’t eat as much. In addition, new research suggests drinking plenty of water may have a positive effect on your metabolism.

**Jury’s Out: Fruit Juice** - Juice can have as many calories as soda, but it has far more to offer in the way of nutrients. This presents a dilemma -- you want the vitamins and antioxidants without all the extra sugar. The safest bet: Look for 100% fruit juice. You can also slash calories by drinking water with a tiny bit of juice added.

**Helper: Vegetable Juice** - Vegetable juice is every bit as nutritious as fruit juice with about half the calories but a lot more sodium. One cup of tomato juice has 41 calories, compared to 122 calories for orange juice. Juice with pulp provides some fiber too, may controlling hunger.

**Jury’s Out: Smoothies** - Blend a banana, strawberries, and blueberries into a frothy smoothie, and you’ve got a delicious arsenal of disease-fighting vitamins and minerals. The homemade variety is best, because you can control the ingredients -- skim milk and fresh or frozen fruit are all you need.

**Jury’s Out: Low-Fat Milk** - Eating calcium-rich foods may do a body good, and it may help you lose weight. Some recent studies suggest that drinking higher amounts of milk or eating other dairy foods can help with weight loss.

**Spoiler: Energy Drinks** - Most sports and energy drinks are calorie bombs like soda. They may have more added nutrients, but you can find the same vitamins and minerals in low-calorie foods. You should stay hydrated with water rather than sports drinks unless needing additional nutrients after excessive sweating and exercise.

**Helper: Black Coffee** - When you need a shot of caffeine, coffee is a better choice than soda or energy drinks. Black coffee is calorie-free and rich in antioxidants. Studies have shown that consuming moderate amounts of coffee (about 3 to 4 cups a day) may improve mood and concentration, and reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes and several types of cancer.

*Source: http://www.webmd.com/*