

May 2006

## FACT SHEET ON STROKE PREVENTION

### 10 ways to beat stroke

#### What is stroke?

**A stroke happens when the blood supply to part of the brain is cut off either by blockage of an artery or by a bleed from a burst blood vessel (haemorrhage). This damages nerve cells causing loss of function or sensation in some parts of the body.**

**Some people are more at risk of having a stroke than others. Risk is related to your genes, age and lifestyle. By changing your lifestyle, especially if there is a family history, you can reduce your risk of a stroke.**

#### **1. Check your blood pressure**

Untreated high blood pressure (hypertension) is the biggest single risk factor. Have your blood pressure checked by your family doctor who should also check other factors including your cholesterol, weight and your risk of diabetes.

#### **2. Manage your blood pressure**

If your blood pressure is above normal levels, your doctor will advise lifestyle changes and possibly medication. Always follow this advice. Medication for blood pressure is usually for life.

#### **3. Stop smoking**

Smoking doubles your risk of stroke. If you smoke, you should stop. For advice and support call the National Quitline 1850 201 203

#### **4. Be more active**

Aim to include at least 30 minutes of activity most days. Find something you enjoy. A great way to increase your activity is to build it into your everyday life such as walking to work or taking the stairs more often.

#### **5. Have a healthy diet**

Follow the Food Pyramid guidelines. Eat five portions of fruit and vegetables every day. Eat more high fibre foods such as wholegrain breads and cereals. Eat less fatty foods, especially foods high in saturated fat, such as fatty meat, confectionary, chocolate and snack foods.

#### **6. Be a healthy weight**

Regular physical activity and a healthy diet will help you maintain a healthy weight. To lose weight include physical activity at a moderate intensity every day for 60 minutes; follow a healthy diet and cut out alcohol. It may help to join a weight loss group.

#### **7. Drink less alcohol**

If you drink, keep within the recommended limits. Men should drink no more than 2-3 standard drinks per session and women no more than 1-2 standard drinks. Spread your drinking over the week and keep some days alcohol-free.

**8. Eat less salt**

Too much salt increases blood pressure. Most of us eat more salt than our bodies need. Try eating more fresh foods and less salty foods, ready meals, fast food and snacks. Try pepper, herbs and spices instead of salt to flavour your food.

**9. Take time out for yourself**

Learning to relax and enjoy your life will help you cope with stress and can benefit you and your body in many ways. If you feel under stress most of the time talk to your doctor or a friend.

**10. Check out our website**

For more information on any aspect of heart health, heart disease or stroke check out our website [www.irishheart.ie](http://www.irishheart.ie) or call our Patient Helpline at 1890 432 787