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Physical health

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Raising awareness about stroke prevention

<insert clip: World Stroke Week discussion on SABC from 00:20 - 01:00 –

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X6SnT0W4ccw>>

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As a medical condition, strokes affect millions of people worldwide, but many strokes can be prevented with the right knowledge and lifestyle choices. Before we delve into some of the prevention strategies, let's understand what a stroke is. Neurologist, Dr Dimakatso Makwela, explains.

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3peQn2o78Fc>>

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Strokes can happen in one of two ways.

An ischemic stroke is the most common type of stroke and, according to the American Stroke Association, accounts for approximately 87% of all cases.

A hemorrhagic stroke, on the other hand, happens when a blood vessel in the brain ruptures or leaks, causing bleeding within the brain.

Several lifestyle factors play a significant role in stroke prevention. Here are some key measures you can take:

Firstly, if you're a smoker, prioritise quitting and taking care of your lungs. Smoking is a major risk factor for stroke. The harmful chemicals in tobacco can damage blood vessels and increase the risk of blood clots.

Secondly, managing high blood pressure is essential, as hypertension has been shown to be the leading cause of strokes. Monitor your blood pressure as regularly as your doctor recommends and follow your doctor's advice to keep it within a healthy range.

Next is controlling diabetes. High blood sugar levels can damage blood vessels over time. Managing diabetes through a balanced diet and medication, if necessary, is crucial for stroke prevention.

It's also important to maintain a healthy diet. Be sure to eat a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean proteins, while reducing your intake of saturated and trans fats, salt and sugar.

Lastly, include regular exercise in your routine. Physical activity helps to maintain a healthy weight, lower blood pressure and improve overall cardiovascular health and well-being. Aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise per day, five times per week.

<Note: more about exercise follows here>

Regular physical activity not only helps prevent stroke, but also promotes overall well-being.

Exercise helps lower high blood pressure, which is a major risk factor for stroke.

It supports a healthy weight, which reduces the risk of diabetes, another significant stroke risk factor.

Exercise also strengthens the heart and circulatory system, making them more efficient.

Lastly, physical activity helps reduce stress, which can contribute to hypertension.

<Note: this can be treated almost like an 'ad' or a break between the points above and the next section>

If you need support in any of the areas of your life that these preventative measures relate to, speak to a medical professional for advice.

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Recognising the signs of a stroke is vital for seeking immediate medical attention, as prompt treatment can significantly improve outcomes. The World Stroke Organisation encourages us all to respond quickly and save precious time.

<insert the full clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CjNMRTx3e2w>>

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When it comes to recognising the signs of a stroke, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends making use of a simple acronym: FAST.

F is for face: Ask the person to smile. Does one side of their face droop?

A is for arms: Have them raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?

S is for speech: Ask them to repeat a simple phrase. Is their speech slurred or strange?

T is for time: If you observe any of the signs mentioned here, it's time to call Emergency Medical Services immediately.

By making healthy lifestyle choices, recognising the signs of a stroke and incorporating regular physical exercise into our routines, we can greatly reduce the risk of this medical condition.

Thank you to the SABC and World Stroke Organisation for the audio clips used in this sound bite. This sound bite does not constitute medical advice. For confidential support, speak to your doctor or to one of our counsellors. Please refer to your dedicated toll-free number or, alternatively, send an SMS to 31581.

Audio references

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3peQn2o78Fc>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X6SnT0W4ccw>