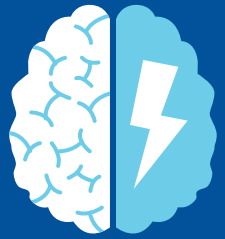


STROKE CLUB

A publication for stroke survivors and their families

Vol. 5.2023



Come to the Stroke Club meeting May 16th, 2023



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We are happy to say we are once again meeting in person for Stroke Club!

The Stroke Club meeting will be Tuesday May 16th, at 7:00 pm., at New Hope United Methodist Church located at 4525 Beaver Ave., Des Moines. The church is accessible.

We are still working on some of the logistical issues with running the meeting. We hope to be able to resume many of the previous details such as rides, checking blood pressure etc.

Since we have not worked out details about providing rides to Stroke Club, you can call Amy Johnson, PT at UnityPoint at 515-263-5166 to let us know if there is an interest or need for a ride.

This month our speaker will be Lisa Jenison. Lisa has been in the brain injury field for nearly 25 years. She has been a Neuro Resource Facilitator with (BIAIA) the Brain Injury Alliance of Iowa for 9.5 years. In her role she provides support to a case load of persons that are in South and Southwest Iowa. She also assists with oversight of their database, assigns the new intakes to the appropriate facilitator, represents her agency on the Falls Prevention Coalition, helps run the Central Iowa Support Group, and participates in various other activities.

Lisa will be attending the Stroke Support Group on May 16th and will be talking about what BIAIA does and how this program could possibly help you.

Please plan to join in the opportunity to see your friends once again at Stroke Club and to learn what Lisa has to share with our group.

As a reminder if you have something special you would like to see in the newsletter please don't hesitate to let me know. My phone number is 515- 255-0366. My email address is stktek1@gmail.com

Thanks, your Newsletter Editor, Sue Toale Knapp.

Five Tips to Improve Brain Health and Mental Health

We can't control our genetic risk factors for dementia, and we can't control what happened to us in the past," says Christopher M. Wilson, MD, senior medical director for specialty care with American Health Network in Indiana. "But we can control our physical activity, diets, social involvement, and how we use our brains. When we do that, we can stack the deck more in our favor for mental health and brain health."

Here's what he and other dementia specialists recommend.

Consider therapy.

"Because of the stigma of mental disorders, people rarely come forward and seek treatment until they've suffered for too long," says Liana Apostolova, MD, FAAN, professor of neurology, radiology, and medical and molecular genetics at Indiana University School of Medicine in Indianapolis. Get a referral from your primary care provider or health insurance company, ask family or friends for recommendations, or contact a local or national mental health organization, such as the National Alliance on Mental Illness. You can also check whether your company has an employee assistance program for mental health care.

Keep busy after you retire.

"Have a plan for retirement," Dr. Wilson advises. "The brain is like a muscle, and if you don't use it, you lose it. If you just sit and watch TV, your brain isn't going to function as well." You could spend time volunteering with an organization related to your career or mentoring young people in your field.

Adopt a hobby.

Think about what you enjoy, whether it's cooking, gardening, bird-watching, singing in a choir, playing chess, painting, journaling, or knitting. "Learning or doing something that involves and engages you intellectually and emotionally seems to be beneficial," says Sudha Seshadri, MD, FAAN, founding director of the Glenn Biggs Institute for Alzheimer's & Neurodegenerative Diseases at UT Health San Antonio in Texas.

Stay in touch with friends.

Strengthen your relationships with family and friends and reconnect with people. Schedule a lunch with an old college friend, offer to take your grandchild to the movies, or plan a weekly coffee date with your spouse, child, or best friend.

Move your body.

If you don't currently exercise, start with walking or water aerobics, but also consider team sports, dancing, lifting weights, hiking, and swimming. Your local YMCA is a good place for exercise activities as well as community.

Reference: *Brain and Life Magazine* February/March 2023

Online Support Group

For those of you looking for an online support group here is a website for you: <http://www.strokenetwork.org/>.

It is a very active group. You have to join like a listserv and you post a question or issue and the group will email you back suggestions. Everyone in the group has survived a stroke and has great ideas they are willing to share.

Do you Need More Vitamin D?

Vitamin D supplements may help protect against autoimmune diseases.

Vitamin D is known for its bone-strengthening properties, but it also helps regulate the immune system and lower inflammation, which may protect against autoimmune disease. People with these diseases tend to have lower levels of vitamin D, but researches didn't know if taking supplements might lower the risk for these diseases.

The Research

To answer this question, researchers gave people vitamin D supplements and followed them for five years. Those who took 2,000 international units (IU) of vitamin D3 daily were up to 30% less likely to get an autoimmune disease than those on placebo.

"There are a lot of potential ways in which vitamin D may influence the development autoimmune diseases, including rheumatoid arthritis," says study senior author Karen Costenbader, MD, MPH, a professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School. Vitamin D helps regulate genes involved with inflammation and immune responses. It also blocks cytokines and production of autoantibodies that fuel immune system's attack on joints and other tissues.

Sunshine and Supplements.

Consuming vitamin D-fortified milk, juice, cereal and other foods as well as fish like trout and salmon helps keep vitamin D levels within a healthy range. But we produce most vitamin D from sun exposure, so people who aren't outdoors much may need to supplement.

Dr. Costenbader recommends a supplement for all her patients with autoimmune diseases, mainly to protect against bone loss, which is worsened by both RA and corticosteroids used to treat it. You also might consider taking a supplement if you have a family history of an autoimmune disease.

The study showed the best results from a 2,000 IU dose but check with your doctor. "Too much can be harmful and increases the risk of kidney stones," Dr. Costenbader adds. Regular blood tests can help ensure healthy levels.
– Stephanie Watson

Reference: Arthritis Foundation Magazine 2022

Six Ways to Stay Healthier into Old Age

Findings from multiple studies on cognitive health and aging suggest that six key lifestyle factors can influence longevity. "Are these six habits going to prevent all disease? No," says Ronald C. Petersen, MD, PhD, FAAN, who is director of the Mayo Clinic Alzheimer's Disease Research Center in Rochester, MN, and serves on the Global Council on Brain Health, an initiative cofounded by AARP. "But if some of these modifications can push back the threshold at which you're going to be cognitively impaired from, say, 72 to 74 or 78, that's a big deal."

Keep moving. Aim for 150 minutes of exercise a week, preferably at a brisk pace. Including some resistance exercises, such as push-ups and planks, to strengthen muscles is a plus.

Engage your mind. Do whatever you enjoy that keeps your mind active, whether it's reading, playing games, doing crossword puzzles, or something else that requires focus, Dr. Petersen advises. If it seems like a chore, it may be hard to stick with, he adds.

Eat more whole foods. A heart-healthy diet doubles as a brain-healthy diet, Dr. Petersen says. Avoid processed foods; eat more fruits, vegetables, grains, and nuts; limit red meat; and don't overdo sweets and alcohol. "Maybe one glass of wine a day," Dr. Petersen says.

Be a social butterfly. As people get older, they tend to stay home more, which can lead to social isolation. "They start to lose their sense of confidence," says Dr. Petersen, and may find reasons not to interact with others. Do all you can to remain engaged with friends, family, and your community.

Get plenty of restful sleep. Establishing a nighttime routine is key to good sleep, says Dr. Petersen, who encourages people to go to bed and get up at the same time every day. He also suggests avoiding stimulating activities, such as exercising or using the internet, right before bed, and limiting alcohol consumption. Talk to your doctor about sleep apnea, which is a common problem among older people and may contribute to feelings of tiredness even after a long night in bed, Dr. Petersen says.

Reference: Brain and Life Magazine December 2022/January 2023

16 WAYS TO FEEL CALMER NOW

By Marisa Cohen

There's so much going on in the world that's completely out of your control. But what you can do is tidy up the messiness inside your own mind.

By addressing nagging worries, doing a bit of housekeeping and injecting our life with a shot of simplicity, you can open up space for more love, optimism and joy.

Here's how to feel better fast.

1. **Consciously forgive someone** - If you're still nursing a wound because you weren't invited to a wedding years ago, consider shedding the burden. "Sometimes you may fear that you're 'giving in' if you let go of a grudge, but you're just giving yourself the opportunity not to let something that happened in the past affect your future," says Elana Miller, M.D., an integrative psychiatrist in Los Angeles. Not only will the act of forgiveness help you move on, but also research has shown that it can lower levels of anxiety and stress.
2. **Take a Slow Sip of Tea** - Cradling a cup of tea in your hands can make you feel cozy and at peace, and being mindful can boost the benefits, says New York City-based meditation instructor Kirat Randhawa. "Notice the color of the tea leaves, the shape of the mug, the scent, what the tea tastes like and how it feels in the body," she says. Harney & Sons Yellow & Blue Tea, which combines calming chamomile, lavender and cornflowers, is an extra-relaxing sip.
3. **Get that Worrisome "thing" checked out** - You know, that mole, pain or bump you tell yourself is nothing (you're probably right!) but that you're not 100% sure about. Such things can gnaw at you, and research tells us uncertainty is a lot more stressful than knowing what to expect, good or bad. So have a doctor look at it already! Either you'll breathe a sigh of relief, or you'll get it treated right away. "Often what seems like a big deal for you is routine for your doctor - they've seen it all and can take some of the worry off your plate," says Dr. Miller.
4. **Take One Small Action** - Whether the subject is politics, eco-anxiety or the invasion of Ukraine, worry about the state of the world we share leaves many of us feeling overwhelmed or paralyzed. But taking a concrete action every day (helping with a campaign, donating time or money to a cause of bilking instead of driving if it's climate change that is weight on you) moves you one small step closer to a better world and you make feel more empowered.
5. **Apologize for that Awkward Moment** - Whether you blurted something insensitive to a colleague or you forgot your sister's birthday, guilt may be quietly poking at you. By clearing the air, you'll repair any damage - or discover that it wasn't the drama you imagined in the first place. "We often feel as if there's a spotlight on us, believe other people are thinking about us way more than they are," says Dr. Miller. "Honestly, no one has the time and energy to judge us as harshly as we judge ourselves."
6. **Limit your Social Media - Bad news** - and the screeching tone of people arguing about everything from vaccines to the Bachelor - can feel like a toothache you can't help poking your tongue into. But staying up late reading every rant can leave you stressed and exhausted. "Doomscrolling is a way for your brain to try to maintain control in a very uncontrollable situation in our world," says neuropsychologist Judy Ho, Ph.D., a professor at Pepperdine University's Graduate School of Education and Psychology. "But we tend to feel horrible afterward." Ho suggests limiting scrolling to 25 minutes, with a hard stop (something you must do) when time's up.



This Month's Health Checklist

Five little wellness moves to make right now

Plan More Parties

Seriously – they're good for your health! When we have gatherings with food and drinks to celebrate positive life events (even virtual ones), it helps everyone feel supported, which can be a boon for mental well-being.

To do: Be ready to celebrate anything with decorating kits from [readyfeste.com](https://www.readyfeste.com).

Walk to Strengthen your Heart

Don't worry, no need to walk a marathon every day to reap the benefits. Older adults who squeeze 6,000 to 9,000 steps into their days have a 40% to 50% lower risk of a cardiovascular event (like heart attack) compared with those who get only 2,000 daily steps, a new study shows.

To do: Amp up shorter walks by adding hills, stairs or fast-paced intervals.

Eat Greens for Strong Bones

The key ingredient might be vitamin K. In a recent study, women who ate more than 100mcg of vitamin K, every day were 31% less likely to have a fracture (especially a broken hip) than those who consumed less than 60mcg.

To do: Aim for at least two servings of spinach, kale, broccoli, or cabbage every day.

Protect your Brain

We often associate smoking with things like lung cancer and stroke, but it could affect brainpower too. In a new study, middle-aged smokers reported more memory loss and confusion than nonsmokers. However, people who had quit recently were less likely to have cognitive decline.

To do: Ask your doc about cessation strategies like CBT, mindfulness, quit lines, and meds.

Take a Nighttime Bath

A new study in Japan found that people who took a warm bath after 7 p.m. were less likely to have high blood pressure than those who didn't. An evening bath might help lower stress and make it easier to fall sleep.

To do: While you soak, try meditating with the Pause Breath Reflect app.

Reference: *Woman's Day Magazine Spring 2023*

7. **Chew on Some Cherries** – The fun-to-eat fruit contains the antioxidant quercetin, which may help promote feelings of calmness, says Registered Dietitian Nutritionist Stefani Sassos, deputy director of the Good Housekeeping Institute's Nutrition lab. She suggests roasting them to bring out the flavor and adding them to ricotta cheese on toast.

8. **Swap to-do's with a Friend** – There's always one chore you just can't seal the deal on – and seeing it reappear on your to-do list only makes you feel bad. Instead, ask a friend who doesn't mind hemming your daughter's skirt to help you out with that, and do a task she hates (say, updating her computer) that feels like no biggie to you.

Since this article is fairly long, I will have the remaining 8 ways in the June Stroke Support Newsletter. Stay calm!

Reference: *Good Housekeeping Magazine June 2022*



The Caregiver's First-Aid Kit



One of the many training courses that I teach in the community focuses on caring for the caregiver. I give each participant a "Caregiver First-Aid Kit" as a reminder of the special significance they have in their role as a caregiver for their loved one.

The kit includes the following items:

- The **MATCH** is to strike up and rekindle friendships and call on those friends when needed. Friends can help you when you need a break from the demands of providing care to your loved one.
- By touching the match to the **CANDLE**, you are able to let the light shine through in your daily role as a caregiver.
- The **POST-IT PAD** is for you to be creative and draw.
- The **CRAYON** is for you to use in play, to color your world and to be creative.
- The **LIFESAVER** is to remind you that you are a lifesaver to your loved one by your willingness to be a caregiver and that others can be a lifesaver to you when you need it. Just ask for help, and you'll be happily surprised at the results.
- The **MINT** is to remind you that you're worth a "mint" to those who know you.
- The **HERSHEY'S KISS** is a reminder that you are loved and appreciated.
- The **HEART-SHAPED GEMSTONE** is a symbol of how **SPECIAL** you are to your loved ones.

I remind each person that they **DO MAKE A DIFFERENCE** and **I THANK** them **FOR ALL THAT** they **DO!**

For all of you caregivers who are tirelessly providing care for your loved one every single day, you are appreciated! Remember to ask for help if you need it, even for an occasional break. Studies show that those who receive an occasional respite break come back refreshed and recharged and are better able to cope with the demands of daily care.

Reference: Caregiver.com

In the Know

News and notes to boost your well-being

Learn a Musical Instrument for your Brain.

Listening to music is a mood booster, playing an instrument is even better. Adults who took an hour-long piano lesson once a week reported less depression, stress, and anxiety after three months. Check with your community college for lessons; many teachers also offer lessons online – see takelessons.com. Or you can learn on your own from an app such as Simply Piano or Yousician.

1 Minute of Intense Exercise a Few Times a Day can Add Years to Your Life

Researchers found that just three or four one-minute periods of high-intensity activity (think huffing and puffing) reduced the risk of dying from heart disease by 49 percent. You don't need to block out an hour at the gym; try a minute of jumping jacks or running up and down stairs before breakfast, lunch and dinner. Or download the 1 Minute Workout app (99 cents) for short, high-intensity routines.

Eye Do

One in 10 Americans hasn't had an eye exam in more than five years, says a recent study. Getting checked isn't just a matter of your vision. Eye doctors can spot changes in the blood vessels in the back of your eyes and skin around the eyes that can be signs of diabetes, heart and thyroid disease.

Adding at least ¾ Teaspoon of Herbs and Spices to your Food can aid your Gut Health

Scientists found that people who ate roughly between ¾ to 1½ tsp. of a variety of spices and herbs a day – including cinnamon, ginger, cumin, turmeric, oregano, basil and thyme – had a greater diversity of gut bacteria, a sign of good gut health. Try adding a pinch of cinnamon and/or turmeric to a smoothie, oregano and basil to sandwiches, and thyme to scrambled eggs. Spicing up meals mean you don't need as much salt – and that can help keep blood pressure levels healthy.

Reference: Better Homes and Gardens Magazine April 2023



Tea-rific for you

Sipping a warm cup isn't just a cozy "me" moment. It's also great for your heart!

Black and green tea both contains powerful antioxidants called polyphenols, which studies suggest can help keep good and bad cholesterol levels in balance, regulate blood sugar, and lower blood pressure – all important heart disease risks factors to manage. Become a tea person in no time.

Make it a Ritual. Try this trick for getting a new habit to stick: Attach it to an existing one. If you usually grab a soda to power through your afternoon, explore unsweetened or low-sugar iced tea instead, or replace your second cup of joe with a stimulating mug of caffeinated tea.

Swap Your Sweeteners. Enjoy your tea with a hint of sweetness? Stir in manuka honey instead of cane sugar. It has antioxidants and antimicrobial properties that sugar doesn't, so you'll get that sweet taste with a health boost.

Smart Heart: Good sleep and heart health go hand in hand. Sip herbal tea before bed to lull you to dreamland.



Reference: Women's Day Magazine December 2022



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Dad Jokes!!



Enjoy this months' edition of Dad Jokes!!

- Got thrown out of my local park after arranging the squirrels by height.
They didn't like me critter sizing.
- Out of all the inventions in the last 100 years, *the dry erase board is probably the most remarkable.*
- Pilots sure are lucky! They don't need suits for work. *Plane clothing is all they need.*
- I gave up playing poker at the laundromat. *I kept having to fold!*
- My pilot friend is looking for a job. *So far he hasn't landed anything.*
- After my walk in the meadow, I had to peel a bunch of blackbirds off my sweater. *They were velcrows!*

Again, Sorry!!!

But I bet I made you laugh or groan!!!

By learning and sharing the F.A.S.T.

warning signs, you just might save a life from stroke.

Call 911 if these signs are present:



F = Face Drooping - Does one side of the face droop or is it numb? Ask the person to smile. Is the person's smile uneven?



A = Arm Weakness - Is one arm weak or numb? Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?



S = Speech Difficulty - Is speech slurred?



T = Time to call 911

Other Stroke Symptoms

Watch for Sudden:

- **NUMBNESS** or weakness of face, arm, or leg, especially on one side of the body
- **CONFUSION**, trouble speaking or understanding speech
- **TROUBLE SEEING** in one or both eyes
- **TROUBLE WALKING**, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- **SEVERE HEADACHE** with no known cause

References: stroke.org