



Brain stroke in early 50's

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Received Date: May 09, 2021; Received Date: May 23, 2021; Accepted Date: May 30, 2021

Editorial

For most young people, the chance of having a stroke seems like impossibility — but there is no such thing as being too young for a stroke. Even though the overall rate of stroke is decreasing, especially in people over age 65, it's actually increasing among young and middle-aged people. A county-by-county analysis, published in November 2019 in the journal *Stroke*, found that between 2010 and 2016, strokes among middle-aged people increased in 3 times as many U.S. counties as strokes in people over age 64. These statistics were also no longer confined to what epidemiologists call the "Stroke Belt," a swath of the southeastern United States in which stroke rates are between 2 and 4 times the national average

How Strokes in Young People Can Be Different

The types of strokes that are seen in younger people are typically different from what doctors see in older patients. "There are certain heart-related problems that seem to be the causes of stroke in young people that seem to be less of a cause as we get older," says Andrew Russ man, DO, a neurologist and the medical director of the Comprehensive Stroke Center at the Cleveland Clinic in Ohio, adding that many young people are unaware they have an underlying condition that contributes to stroke until they have one.

Clotting Disorders Some conditions including sickle cell disease cause the blood to form clumps that can turn into clots and cause strokes in young people, says Russ man. **Substance Abuse** Specifically, doing cocaine constricts blood vessels while increasing the clumping of blood cells that causes clotting, explains Russ man, which is how the drug contributes to stroke in young people.

Factors Young People Can Control to Reduce Stroke Risk

Although having an underlying heart condition is out of your control, several studies have shown that many of the risk factors that make someone susceptible to stroke later in life, such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, and obesity, are becoming more common in younger people. "If you accept that stroke is increasing in people under age 45, one big reason is probably obesity," says Russ man. "Obesity in children and teens is up in America, and that increases the lifetime risk for stroke.

Eating healthy, fresh, and unprocessed foods and not drinking sugary beverages are all associated with a lower risk of cardiovascular disease. Fast food and prepared foods are notoriously high in sodium and are best to avoid. Cutting back on smoking cigarettes, even if you choose not to quit smoking all together, can also lower your risk of stroke in young adulthood. "The good news is that a 30-year-old has a better rate of recovery than an 80-year-old because of better brain plasticity," says Russ man, referring to the brain's ability to adjust and learn new skills. Participants were interviewed in their homes about their medical history.

During those interviews, they were asked if a doctor had ever told them that they had had a stroke. A stroke -- an event where blood flow to the brain is disrupted, either by a blood clot or bleeding -- can be devastating at any age.

The number of people in their 40s and 50s having strokes has rocketed, with obesity and sedentary lifestyles blamed for the rise. New NHS figures show that since 2000, the number of men aged 40 to 54 in England hospitalized after stroke has grown by 46%, and among women, 30%. And for working-age sufferers, stroke can have a crippling financial impact. According to the Stroke Association, lost income due to death and disability caused by a stroke has been estimated to cost those affected £1.3bn a year. "Stroke survivors unable to return to work can struggle to cope with a fall in income, increased household bills and a benefits system that does not recognize the full impact of stroke," says Jon Barrack, the charity's chief executive.

Exercise is key to stroke prevention, helping to lower blood pressure and aiding weight loss. Official advice is to aim to build up to 30 minutes, five times a week. But if you're just starting to get active, sessions on the treadmill can seem depressingly slow to clock up results. You've got to remember the benefits are much greater than the numbers on the display, says Roth well. "If you've been running for half an hour and you've burned 50 calories – about a quarter of a Kit Kat – that sounds disheartening," he explains. "But what happens when you exercise is that you reset your baseline metabolic rate, so that you're actually burning more calories the rest of the time".

Research shows that being obese increases the chances of having a stroke related to a blood clot by 64%, so cutting down on high-fat foods, eating more fibre and getting your five fruit and veg a day can all help reduce stroke risk. Having breakfast will make you feel healthier and stop you snacking during the day, the Stroke Association points out. Top your cereal or porridge with some fruit and that's one of your five a day covered. Other tips include keeping a food diary to keep track of what you're really eating and using smaller dishes to cut control portion sizes.

Citation: Amit Kumar (2021) Brain stroke in early 50's. J Neurosci Clin Res 2021, 6:3.