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Facts About Strokes - Prevention and Treatment

About 795,000 people have a stroke each year and it's become the fourth leading cause of death in the country. The good news is up to 80% of strokes are preventable and if one occurs, it is possible to treat and recover.

A stroke is also known as a **brain attack**. It happens when a blood clot blocks the flow of blood to the brain, causing brain tissue to become damaged or even die. There are two types of strokes. An ischemic stroke is the more common type. It occurs when there is a blockage of a blood vessel that supplies the brain. A hemorrhagic stroke is when a broken blood vessel causes bleeding in the brain.

A stroke can have a huge effect on many functions of your body, including **speech and movement**. Strokes reduce mobility in more than half of stroke survivors 65 and over. In fact, they are a leading cause of serious long-term disabilities among this population.

If you see or have any of these symptoms, **call 911 right away**:

- Sudden numbness or weakness in the face, arm, or leg — especially on one side of the body
- Sudden confusion or trouble speaking or understanding
- Sudden problems seeing in one eye or both eyes

- Sudden dizziness, loss of balance or coordination, or trouble walking
- Sudden severe headache with no known cause

To help prevent strokes:

- Keep your blood pressure under control
- Quit smoking, which increases your risk of a stroke
- Eat healthy foods, like those low in cholesterol and saturated fat, plus fruits and vegetables
- Make exercise part of your daily routine

Strokes can be treatable. Physical and occupational therapy are the most common forms of rehabilitation, helping patients regain their ability to move and relearn daily activities. Speech therapy also can help someone who suffered a stroke to recover some or all of their language skills.

Source: UnitedHealthcare Newsroom, CDC, NIH, 2022
Content is for general informational purposes only and not intended to be medical advice or a substitute for professional health care. See your physician for medical advice personalized to your situation.

Courtesy of UnitedHealthcare®



Aging in Place: How You Can Stay at Home as You Age

As you grow older, you may decide that you want to stay at home rather than move to a long-term or senior care facility. It's important to adopt healthy habits and plan ahead to age in place safely.

Here are a few habits that you can begin practicing to maintain your best health:

- Exercise regularly and eat whole foods to prevent disease, help reduce risk of falls, and improve mental health
- Stay hydrated to regulate your blood pressure, give you energy, boost your kidney function and increase your digestive efficiency
- Keep your brain active with activities such as crossword puzzles
- Visit your primary care provider yearly and stay up to date with health screenings and vaccines

Here's a list of factors you need to consider if you choose to age in place:

1. Is your home accessible?

It's important to identify places in your home that are difficult for you to access or that need repairs, such as stairs or your shower. Installing a stair chair lift, wheelchair ramps, bars in your shower, and correcting poor lighting are a few changes that can make your home more accessible and safer.

If these changes are beyond your budget, community resources such as your local Area Agency on Aging, the welfare department, or the state housing finance agency may be able to help.

2. Do you need help with meals, transportation, or household chores?

Some Medicare Advantage plans may offer discounted meals that are delivered to your home, non-emergency or non-medical transportation, and allowances to order

over-the-counter health items online or over the phone. Check with your plan to see if any of these features are offered.

Other options for home-based support include family members, friends, neighbors, and hiring companies to help with cleaning, daily living, and more.

3. Do you have support nearby?

Whether it's family members, friends, fellow members from your house of worship, or neighbors, aging in place isn't possible without support. Consider moving so you can be closer to people who can help you with everyday tasks and provide personal care.

4. Do you have special health care needs?

If you need reminders to take your medications, there are devices and apps that can help remind you. If you need additional caregiving or in-home care, Medicare or Medicaid might pay for a home health aide to assist with your daily living needs.

5. Are you prepared for a medical emergency?

Check with your Medicare Advantage plan to see if it offers a mobile or in-home emergency response alert system, which connects you to personnel if you fall or have another urgent medical emergency.

It can seem overwhelming to think about all the planning and transitions that need to occur to age well at home, but the earlier you start, the easier it will be to age on your own terms in a place that feels comfortable.

Sources:
blog.providence.org/blog/how-you-can-stay-at-home-as-you-age
nia.nih.gov/health/aging-place/aging-place-growing-older-home

Courtesy of Providence Health Assurance

Substance Use Disorder: Are You at Risk?

Addiction can happen to anyone. Here are some risk factors to know.

If you're like most adults, you have regular screenings for things like cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and other conditions. One serious condition overlooked by many screenings: Substance Use Disorder (SUD).

Before we look at risk factors, let's be clear: SUD is not a character flaw but a medical condition, where the use of substances, like alcohol or drugs, causes problems. SUD can affect anyone, regardless of age. In fact, there are additional risk factors for seniors.

"As you get older, there are physiological changes and your brain becomes much more sensitive. Your tolerance goes down as your body changes. It can put you at risk," said Dr. Benjamin Han, a California geriatrician interviewed for a 2023 New York Times story.

A problem on the rise

"A study of [opioid use disorder](#) in people over 65 enrolled in traditional Medicare...showed a threefold increase in just five years," reported the Times. And the stigma of drug or alcohol use may lead people to underreport it, so the true rate of the disorder may be higher.

Troublingly, drug-related fatalities have risen among seniors. From 2002 to 2021, the rate of [overdose deaths quadrupled](#) to 12 per 100,000, reported JAMA Psychiatry in March, using data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Given the scope and severity of SUD, you're wise to be on the lookout for it in your own life.

Risk factors: How many do you have?

- **History:** Reflect on your past relationship with substances. If you've struggled at some point, even years ago, it's relevant. Awareness of personal history is a good first step in gauging risk.
- **Mental health:** If you're facing depression, anxiety, or similar issues, be aware there's a link between mental health and substance use.
- **Loneliness:** Are you frequently feeling alone, or isolated? These emotions can raise your risk. Staying connected with friends, family, or social groups can be a protective factor.
- **Chronic pain:** While managing pain is essential, frequent use of prescription painkillers, if not closely watched, can raise your risk for dependence.
- **Boredom:** If you're experiencing an absence of meaning or purpose, are you using substances to fill the void?

Preventing SUD: (Self) Awareness is key

Want to improve your odds of avoiding SUD? Start here:

- **Communication:** Talk to your doctor about any concerns, changes in health, or medications. Get regular check-ups to address potential risk factors.
- **Education:** Understand the effects of medications for pain or other health issues. Knowing the risks and potential side effects

helps you make better decisions. If you use alcohol or cannabis, educate yourself about what they do to your brain and your body.

- **Socialization:** Try being a people person (even if you're an introvert). Join a club. Start a new hobby—online or in person. Being social helps protect against loneliness and isolation.
- **Lifestyle:** Do things that promote physical and mental well-being, like regular exercise.
- **Coping skills:** Seek out healthier ways to cope with boredom, stress, or pain. Going outside, meditating, or immersing yourself in art or music can often do the trick.

Now that you know more about the risk factors for SUD, you'll be able to keep an eye out for them—and keep yourself safe down the road.

If you think you have Substance Use Disorder, talk with your doctor or other healthcare provider.

Sources:

[NYTimes.com/2023/07/09/health/seniors-substance-abuse.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2023/07/09/health/seniors-substance-abuse.html)

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Courtesy of PacificSource

2025 Plan Information Is Here!

Watch your mailbox in September for the 2025 benefit and rate information. You can view the schedule for plan change presentations at pershealth.com/presentations.



Baked Mac and Cheese

This simple staple has less fat while still delivering the creamy, cheesy, crunchy-topped side dish we all know and love.

Ingredients

- 8 oz uncooked elbow macaroni noodles (1 ¾ cups)
- 6 tablespoons butter, divided
- ¼ cup white whole wheat flour
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 2 cups skim milk
- 2 cups shredded reduced-fat sharp cheddar cheese (8 ounces), divided
- ¾ cup plain panko breadcrumbs

Directions

- Heat oven to 350°F. Coat a 2-quart casserole dish with cooking spray.
- Cook and drain macaroni as directed on package.
- While the macaroni is cooking, melt 4 tablespoons of the butter in a 3-quart saucepan over medium heat.
- Stir in flour, salt, pepper, mustard and Worcestershire sauce. Cook, stirring constantly, for 1 minute, or until mixture is smooth and bubbly.
- Stir in milk. Heat to boiling, stirring constantly. Boil and stir 1 minute.
- Stir in 1½ cups of the cheese, until melted. Remove from heat.
- Stir macaroni noodles into cheese sauce.
- Pour into prepared casserole dish.

Topping

- Place remaining ½ cup of cheese and panko in medium bowl.
- Melt remaining 2 tablespoons of butter and stir into the panko mixture.
- Sprinkle over the macaroni and cheese mixture.
- Bake uncovered 22-26 minutes or until topping is crispy and casserole is bubbly.

Nutritional information (per serving)

Serving size: 1 cup
Number of servings: 10

Calories	264
Total fat	12g
Saturated fat	7g
Cholesterol	35mg
Sodium	412mg
Total carbohydrate	27g
Dietary fiber	1g
Sugars	4g
Protein	11g

Source: Renew Magazine, Fall/Winter 2023
Courtesy of UnitedHealthcare®

Low-Carb Chicken & Cheddar Lettuce Wraps

This fresh, crunchy wrap sandwich is brimming with vegetables, yet still delivers a satisfying amount of protein thanks to the chicken and cheese. Crisp iceberg lettuce is what keeps this wrap sandwich ultra-low in carbs (just 4 grams per serving).

Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon canola mayonnaise
- 1 tablespoon stone-ground mustard
- 5 iceberg lettuce leaves
- 3 ounces rotisserie chicken breast, shredded
- 2 tomato slices
- ½ cup alfalfa sprouts (½ ounce)
- ½ (4 ounces) cucumber, sliced
- 2 tablespoons thinly sliced red onion
- 1 (2 ounces) sharp Cheddar cheese slice

Directions

- Stir together mayonnaise and mustard in a small bowl; set aside. Stack iceberg lettuce leaves on a large piece of parchment paper. Shingle leaves from left to right while stacking to create an 8- x 9-inch rectangle, with 9-inch side facing you.
- Spread mayonnaise mixture on the lower half of iceberg leaves, making sure to spread all the way to the edges. Place chicken in the center of mayonnaise mixture. Top with tomato slices, sprouts, cucumber slices, onion slices and cheese slice.
- Using parchment as a guide and starting with side closest to you, roll into a tight log. Once completely rolled, roll the remainder of parchment around lettuce. Cut in half and serve.

Nutritional information (per serving)

Serving size: ½ of wrap
Number of servings: 2

Calories	208
Total fat	13g
Saturated fat	7g
Cholesterol	50mg
Sodium	475mg
Total carbohydrate	4g
Dietary fiber	2g
Sugars	2g
Protein	20g

Source: [Eating Well Low-Carb Chicken & Cheddar Lettuce Wraps Recipe \(eatingwell.com\)](#)
Courtesy of Moda Health



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