

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Carotid Artery Stenosis
- Holiday Diet Tips
- Sweet Potatoes

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Carotid Artery Stenosis

Carotid artery stenosis causes more than half of all strokes in the United States (1). The carotid arteries help supply blood to the brain. When plaque builds up in the arteries they can become occluded or narrowed and form a blood clot which can go to the brain. When this happens either a stroke or mini stroke occurs. A mini stroke or TIA (transient ischemic attack) is diagnosed if the symptoms resolve in 24 hours or less. If symptoms persist longer than 24 hours, a stroke or CVA (cerebral vascular accident) is diagnosed. Neither are good. Individuals with a TIA have a 5 percent chance of having a stroke within the next 30 days

and a 25 percent chance of having a stroke within the next year (1). Symptoms of stroke or TIA include slurred speech or inability to speak the right



words, vision changes or loss of vision in one eye, and weakness or numbness on one side of the body. If these occur, call 911 or go to the nearest ER at the onset of symptoms. Certain blood thinners may be given to help dissolve the clot if a

diagnosis is made within the first 3 hours of symptoms. Carotid stenosis is usually diagnosed with a carotid ultrasound or Doppler. This is an easy test that can be done in an office setting or a hospital. If there is a significant blockage, around 60-70 percent or more, further imaging may be ordered. This can be in the form of a MRA or CTA of the neck. An angiogram may also be needed which is an invasive procedure where dye is injected into the arteries. If the blockage is not bad enough to fix, it may be monitored and treated with medicines. Medicines usually include aspirin, a cholesterol medicine called a statin, and maybe an antiplatelet medication like plavix. Stopping smoking and controlling blood pressure and diabetes are also important treatments. (3).
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Tip of the Month

Holiday Diet Tips:

1. Limit the gravy to a tablespoon. Generally it is loaded with calories, fat, and sodium.
2. Try to avoid or limit the bread and rolls. These are usually packed with sodium.
3. If drinking alcohol, make sure to drink a glass of water in between drinks.
4. Limit casserole and soup intake unless you know this was made in a low sodium, heart healthy manner.
5. Sample sweets (a bite or two) instead of having an entire serving. (2).



Honey Covered Sweet Potatoes



Recipe from
"Breaking the
Salt Habit" by
Erik Williams

Ingredients:

2 lb Sweet Potatoes
(cut into 1\2" cubes)
1\4 cup Olive Oil
1\4 cup Honey
1\2 tsp. Cinnamon

Directions:

1. Spread out sweet potatoes in a small casserole dish.
2. In a small bowl, combine remaining ingredients.
3. Mix Well. Pour over sweet potatoes.
4. Bake for 1 hour, stirring every 15 minutes.
5. Enjoy!

Health Information

Serving size 6 oz.
Servings 5 servings
Calories 230
Total fat 11g
Sat fat 2g
Cholesterol 0mg
Sodium 11mg
Total fiber 3g
Protein 21g
Carbohydrates 33g
Potassium 169mg

Quote of the Month: "For every minute you are angry, you lose sixty seconds of happiness." Ralph Waldo Emerson

Did you Know?

Did you know you may not have any symptoms of carotid artery stenosis until it is too late? Some

blockages in the neck, the stomach, and the legs can be detected with a stethoscope. When listening over the arteries with a stethoscope, a bruit may be detected. A bruit is a sound "commonly created by turbulent blood

flow through narrowed arteries" (1). If a bruit is heard, it does not mean there is significant blockages, but there could be and is worth doing an ultrasound at that point for more information. The absence of a bruit does not rule out significant blockage. Depending on your past medical history and risk factors, your health care provider may still do more testing to make sure.

Listening for a bruit is an easy, free test that can be the difference in preventing a stroke. Make sure you get an exam when you go into the office. Just because there was no bruit six months ago doesn't mean there will not be one now. Blockage in the carotid artery usually does not cause any symptoms until there is a mini stroke or a stroke. Prevention is best, especially in this case.



Examining
the neck for
a bruit

If the blockage needs to be fixed, there are two options: carotid endarterectomy or a carotid stent. Based on the guidelines from the ACC/AHA these are both viable options for most people. Each have their own benefits in certain patient populations. Carotid endarterectomy still appears to be the most common treatment form in people that can undergo surgery at fairly low risk. However, carotid stenting is a great option for people who are not good surgical candidates. There are some blockages that may not be able to be surgically fixed due to the location. In this situation, then carotid artery stenting would be first line therapy. (3), (4).

After a carotid endarterectomy, a low dose aspirin is recommended. Long term, aspirin, clopidogrel (Plavix), or the combination of aspirin and dipyridamole may be used. After a carotid stent is placed, aspirin plus clopidogrel (Plavix) should be given for at least a month. Your cardiologist will decide after that what the long term therapy will be. Everyone should receive a cholesterol medication called a statin unless there is a contraindication. (3).

Remember, each case is different. There are many variables that decide how and when a blockage should be fixed.

