

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Carotid Artery Stenosis
- Holiday Stress Tips
- Mashed Potatoes

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# The Beat

VOLUME 5 ISSUE 8

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DECEMBER 15, 2016

## 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

### Dealing with Stress:

1. Consider meditation or prayer at least once a day.
2. Use positive talk instead of negative talk. (I've got this, we can get some help if we need it, we can work it out etc.)
3. Go for a walk.
4. Do something enjoyable (Start an art project, have coffee with a friend, listen to music, sew, read a book).
5. Split up a big problem or tasks into smaller problems so they are not so overwhelming.
6. Set your clock back 5-10 minutes so you do not run late. (2).



# Sour Cream and Onion Mashed Potatoes



Recipe from  
"Breaking the  
Salt Habit" by  
Erik Williams  
(5).

## Ingredients:

2 lb Potatoes  
1/3 cup Light Sour Cream  
1/4 cup Skim Milk  
1/4 cup Green Onion, green part only  
3 Tbsp. Unsalted Butter  
Pepper to Taste

## Directions:

1. Peel and slice potatoes into small chunks and place in a large pot.
2. Cover with water and boil 15-20 minutes or until potatoes are tender.
3. Drain.
4. Using electric mixer, mash potatoes and blend in remaining ingredients until cream.

## Health Information

Serving size 1/2 cup  
Servings 6 servings  
Calories 264  
Total fat 7g  
Sat fat 5g  
Cholesterol 20mg  
Sodium 32mg  
Total fiber 6g  
Protein 6g  
Carbohydrates 39g  
Potassium 1073mg

**Quote of the Month:** "If you judge people, you have no time to love them." Mother Teresa

## Did you Know?



Examining  
the neck for  
a bruit

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.

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.

