Stroke Prevention

Your caregiver wants you to have information on preventing a stroke. Stroke is the primary cause of nursing home confinement and long-term disability among adults. **Preventive care may reduce the risk of having a stroke by 80%**. Factors that can reduce your risk of having a stroke include:

- **Stop smoking**. Smoking increases your risk for having a stroke, heart attack, cancer, and emphysema.
- **Blood pressure control**. High blood pressure (*hypertension*) is present in 70% of patients with stroke. Reducing blood pressure reduces the risk of having a stroke by 40%.
- **Blood sugar control**. Poorly controlled diabetes is an important risk factor which increases your risk for having a stroke or heart attack.
- **Diet and Exercis**e. A low fat, low cholesterol diet and medicines to control elevated cholesterol levels, as well as getting regular exercise can be beneficial in preventing both stroke and heart disease.
- **Limit alcohol intake**. You should not drink more than 2 drinks a day for non-pregnant women. Men should limit alcohol to 2 drinks a day.
- **Blood thinners**. Aspirin and other blood thinners (such as Coumadin) are helpful in reducing the risk of forming abnormal blood clots that can lead to stroke. If you have atrial fibrillation, you should be on a blood thinner unless there is a good reason you cannot take them.
- **Cholesterol**. Your health care provider may have you take medicine to control this.

About half the people who have a stroke have a transient ischemic attack (TIA) before having the stroke. A transient ischemic attack (TIA) is a "warning stroke" that causes stroke-like symptoms. If you have a TIA, further medical evaluation is very important! If you have a TIA your doctor will recommend you undergo an ultrasound to evaluate the large arteries that supply blood to your brain. If these blood vessels are partially blocked, you may be a candidate for a procedure that will reduce your risk of stroke including:

- Surgery to remove the plaque.
- A stent placed across the area of plaque to open up blood flow.

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