



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## TAKING STEPS TO STAY HEALTHY DURING AMERICAN STROKE MONTH

PATTY RITCHIE May 2, 2016



Every 40 seconds, someone in our country becomes the victim of a stroke, a disease that occurs when blood flow to an area of the brain is cut off, causing brain cells to stop working and resulting in loss of things like memory and muscle control. Every May, an extra effort is made to raise awareness of the signs and symptoms of stroke through American Stroke Month.

While stroke is one of the leading causes of death in the United States, the good news is that it's largely preventable. By engaging in a healthy lifestyle and becoming more aware of the warning signs, you can protect yourself from this potentially life-threatening disease. Follow the tips below—and share them with your loved ones—to stay healthy:

***Pay attention to your blood pressure:*** High blood pressure is one of the leading causes of stroke, with three out of four people who suffer their first strokes having high blood pressure. Monitor your blood pressure and take steps—including reducing salt in your diet, avoiding high cholesterol foods, exercising and staying away from tobacco—to ensure it doesn't reach unhealthy levels.

***Maintain a healthy weight:*** Often times, complications related to obesity—namely high blood pressure and diabetes—increase the risk of having a stroke. Make sure you're maintaining a healthy weight by incorporating exercise into your daily routine and making health foods, like fruits and vegetables part of your diet.

***Know the warning signs:*** Strokes are largely treatable—but after one occurs, every second counts. It's important to know the warning signs, and act as quickly as possible in the aftermath. Experts suggest remembering the “F-A-S-T” acronym that helps to identify symptoms and stands for “Face drooping, Arm weakness, Speech difficulty, Time to call 9-1-1.”

***Avoid excess alcohol consumption:*** Studies have shown that those who drink more than two alcoholic beverages per-day increase their risk of stroke by 34 percent. To reduce your risk, drink responsibly—and in moderation.

At the state level, we're taking steps too to combat stroke and provide top-notch medical care for victims. Through a measure I cosponsor (S5771-A), New York State would be directed to establish comprehensive stroke centers, primary stroke centers and acute stroke-ready

hospitals that would have the ability to better treat those suffering a stroke and give them an improved chance at recovery. In addition, the legislation also would modify the state's emergency medical response system to assure that stroke patients are quickly identified and transported to facilities that have specialized treatment.

As American Stroke Month continues, I hope you'll take an opportunity to further educate yourself about the warning signs, as well as about other steps you can take to prevent the disease. For more information, [click here](#).