

Can diet prevent stroke?

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Objective: The purpose of this presentation is to discuss the role of diet, especially Mediterranean diet and DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) in primary and secondary stroke prevention. Background: The INTERSTROKE study showed, that diet may be one of ten most important modifiable risk factors for stroke, although there were some regional differences in the direction of the effect (South Asia vs all other regions) as well as in the effect size (younger vs older stroke patients). Recent data has brought some evidence that Mediterranean diet may protect against cardiovascular disease and specifically stroke, decreasing 5-year stroke risk by approximately 30%. Similarly DASH diet, which differs from Mediterranean diet with the contribution of fat, low-fat dairy products, sweets, sugar-containing beverages and alcohol has been shown to be inversely correlated with ischemic stroke risk. There is insufficient evidence from RCTs for any effect of whole grain diets, low glycaemic index diets or high polyphenols intake on cardiovascular outcomes. The research on dietary pattern after stroke on secondary stroke risk is limited. Conclusion: There is still some controversy regarding the role of specific diets in secondary stroke prevention, stronger evidence exists for the role of diet in primary prevention of cerebrovascular diseases. However, apart from pharmacological therapy, healthy diet, regular physical activity, and weight loss in overweight or obese patients may represent an interesting approach to stroke prevention with low risks and high potential benefits from a public health perspective.