



## Healthy Diet Lowers Stroke Risk

A healthy diet with lots of vegetables and fruits high in antioxidants has shown to lower the risk of stroke. "Lycopene seems to have some beneficial effects when in the form of fruits and vegetables," says Deepak Bhatt, MD. He is the director of the Integrated Interventional Cardiovascular Program at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston.

Men who eat lots of tomatoes and tomato-based products may have a lower risk for stroke, a new study suggests.

Tomatoes are rich in the antioxidant lycopene.

Men who had the highest levels of lycopene in their blood were 55% less likely to have a stroke, compared with men who had the lowest levels of the antioxidant in their blood

The benefits likely only apply to whole foods -- not individual supplements of lycopene. "Eat more fruits and vegetables to reduce your risk of stroke' is a safe conclusion," he says. The new study only included men, but the same benefits likely extend to women.

Although eating more vegetables is good advice, the study looked at lycopene levels in blood, not at how many tomatoes the men ate, says Daniel Labovitz, MD. He is the director of the Stern Stroke Center at Montefiore Medical Center in New York City.

What's more, the study just showed a link. It was not designed to say whether or not eating more tomatoes can lower stroke risk. "There is no reason to think that tomatoes are bad, but we haven't proven that they are special either," he says.

One of the best ways to lower stroke risk is to eat a healthy diet that is rich in fruits and vegetables, and to exercise regularly. "Lifestyle changes are better than any pill we can prescribe."

Rafael Ortiz, MD, is less cautious in his interpretation of the study. "I would definitely recommend an increased intake of fruits and vegetables -- especially tomatoes to decrease your chances of stroke," he says. He is the director of the Center for Stroke and Neuro-Endovascular Surgery at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York City

The study also shows that smokers tended to have the lowest blood levels of lycopene. Smoking is a major risk factor for stroke

So enjoy more vegetables including tomatoes in any form fresh canned, frozen or even tomato paste! And quit smoking, your brain will thank you!

Article information from: [www.webmd.com/stroke/news/20121008/tomatoes-may-lower-your-risk-stroke](http://www.webmd.com/stroke/news/20121008/tomatoes-may-lower-your-risk-stroke)

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