

Vibrant Health

FOR WOMEN

4 must-know facts about stroke

EACH year, twice as many women in the U.S. die from stroke as die from breast cancer. And women are more likely than men to have a stroke—but are often unaware of their risk and what they can do to reduce it.

Here are four things every woman should know about stroke:

1 A stroke is a brain attack.

Like a heart attack, a stroke happens when the blood supply to the organ is

cut off. Strokes are usually caused by a clogged artery that blocks the delivery of blood and oxygen to the brain. A stroke can cause brain cells to die, leading to brain damage or death.

2 Some risk factors are specific to women.

The most common risk factors for stroke for both men and women are getting older; being overweight; smoking; having a family history of stroke; not exercising; and having high blood pressure, diabetes or high blood cholesterol.

But for women, the following can also increase stroke risk:

- ▶ Having migraines with auras.
- ▶ Having an autoimmune disease,

such as lupus, or a blood-clotting disorder.

- ▶ Using birth control pills or menopausal hormone therapy.
- ▶ Being pregnant.
- ▶ Being postmenopausal and having a waist larger than 35 inches and a triglyceride level higher than 128 mg/dL of blood.

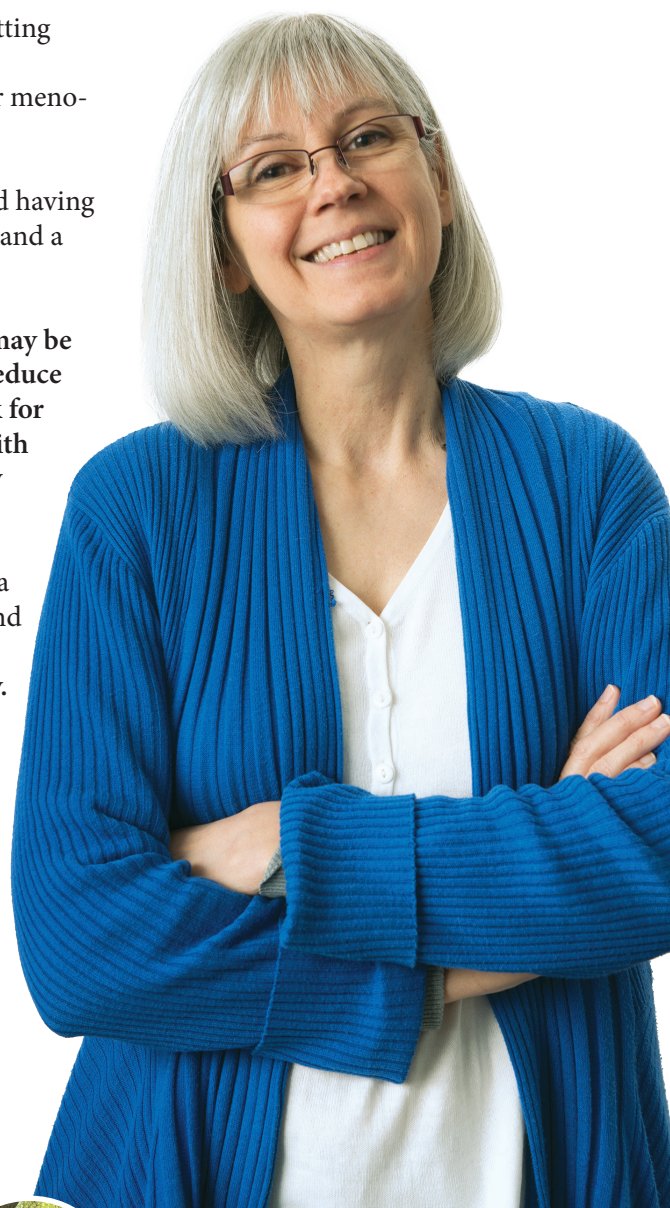
3 You may be able to reduce your risk for stroke with a healthy

lifestyle. That includes controlling your blood pressure and cholesterol levels, being a healthy weight, exercising, and not smoking.

4 A stroke is an emergency.

Call 911 if you or someone else shows signs or symptoms of a stroke. Those include sudden numbness or weakness in the face, arm or leg—especially on one side of the body; sudden confusion or trouble speaking or understanding; or sudden severe headache with no known cause.

Read about our stroke program at www.sgmh.org.



Sources: American Stroke Association; National Stroke Association; Office on Women's Health



Rid your home of asthma triggers

2



Ticked off? Wait till you get the facts

3



ASTHMA AROUND THE HOUSE

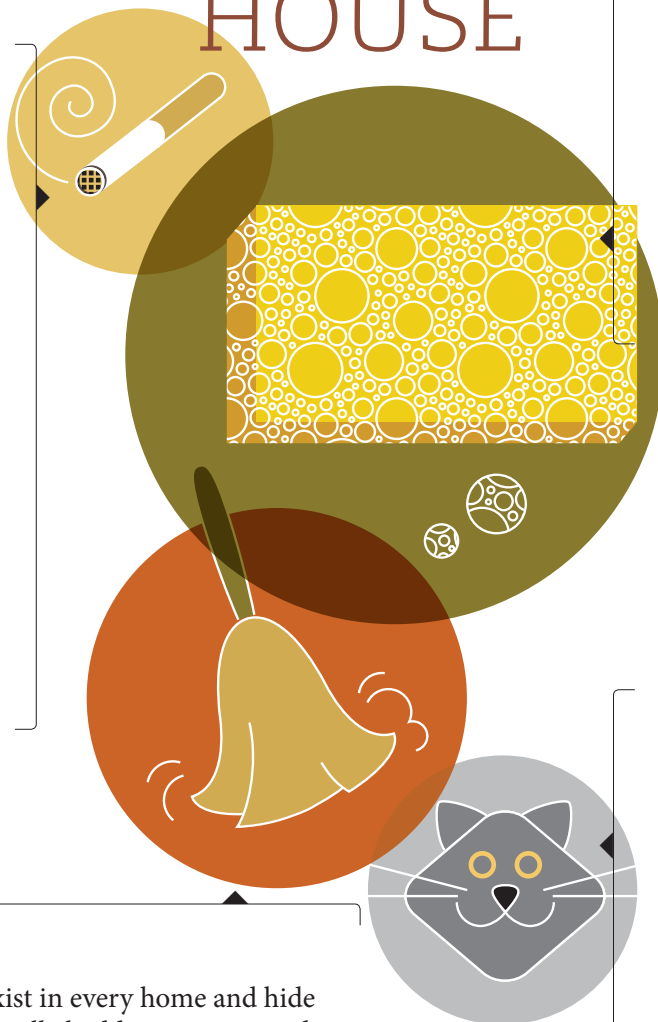
Stepping inside your front door shouldn't make you—or anyone in your family—wheeze. Yet any number of substances that can bring on an asthma attack might be lurking inside.

Here's a look at how to rid your home of four common asthma triggers, which may help keep this lung disease under control.

Secondhand smoke and indoor air pollutants

Secondhand smoke not only causes asthma attacks; it can make them more severe. So don't allow smoking in your home—ever.

Smoke from burning wood is also a trigger. Only use wood that's been covered and is dry in a fireplace; there will be less smoke. And if you cook with gas, always use the exhaust fan. Gas stoves release nitrogen dioxide, which may make asthma flare up.



Mold

This trigger needs moisture to grow. Control mold by keeping the humidity level in your home low—no higher than 50 percent. Use an air conditioner or dehumidifier if necessary. Fix water leaks as soon as possible.

Taking a shower? Use an exhaust fan or open a window. And if you see mold on hard surfaces, clean it up with soap and water. Then let the area completely dry.

For more tips on managing your asthma, visit our health library at www.sgmh.org.

Animal allergens

No matter how well-loved, a furry pet can make asthma worse in people who are allergic to animal dander. Sorry, but the best defense is to find another home for Fluffy or Fido.

If you just can't part with your pet, keep it out of the bedroom of the person with asthma. Also, keep the pet away from upholstered furniture, carpets and stuffed toys as much as possible.

Dust mites

These tiny bugs exist in every home and hide in many places, especially bedding, carpets and items covered with fabric.

Keep mites at bay by using dust-proof, zippered covers on pillows and mattresses. Vacuum carpet and upholstered furniture every week. And wash bedding in hot water weekly. Wash stuffed toys in hot water too.

Sources: American College of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

HEALTH news

Clinical trials: Is one a good choice for you?

Even if subjects like chemistry and biology gave you fits in high school, you can still contribute to medical science. Just join a clinical trial.

According to the National Institutes of Health, clinical trials are health-related research studies that help medical professionals learn new and better ways to care for patients.

Among other things, trials may focus on:

- ▶ Experimental drugs or new combinations of drugs.
- ▶ New surgical techniques or devices.
- ▶ Improved ways to diagnose disease.
- ▶ More effective ways to prevent illness or improve the quality of life for people with chronic illnesses.

Each trial is conducted in phases and has specific participation guidelines. A study may only be open to people of a certain age, gender or ethnicity, for example. Or it may be limited to people with specific health conditions.

While there are potential benefits to participating in a clinical trial, there also are risks. Be sure you understand both before you sign up.

For more information, talk to your doctor.



LYME DISEASE It's time for ticks

Bug bites are, for the most part, an annoyance. But at other times, they can lead to big problems.

That's true for thousands of people bitten each year by deer ticks carrying Lyme disease, the most common bugborne disease in the U.S.

Untreated, the bacterium that causes Lyme disease can be serious. It can lead to joint pain and nervous system problems—and sometimes to heart trouble and severe fatigue.

See it and feel it

Usually, the first sign of Lyme disease is a circular rash—much like a bull's-eye—that starts out as a small red spot at the site of the bite and then expands. It can range in size from fairly small (the size of a coin) to quite large (the width of a person's back).

Early symptoms include fever, fatigue, headache, a stiff neck and body aches. If

the disease is diagnosed and treated with antibiotics at this early stage, most people recover quickly and completely—which is why you should see your doctor right away if you have symptoms. He or she will take a detailed medical history and possibly order a screening test.

Prevent it

Most tick bites occur in the summer, when ticks and people share campsites, backyards, gardens and other outdoor spots.

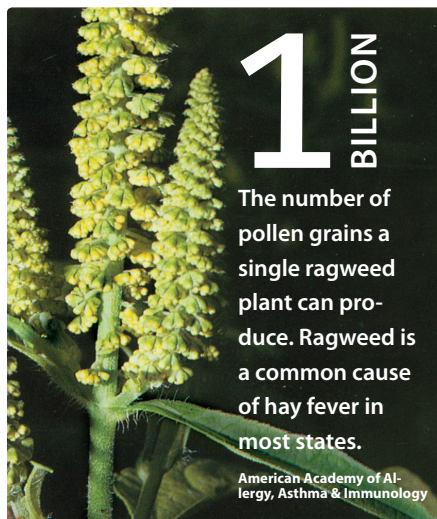
Before you go into these areas, put on a long-sleeved shirt, long pants, a hat and shoes that cover your whole foot. Light-colored clothes make ticks easier to see.

When you come back inside, remove your clothes and check yourself for ticks.

If you find a tick, remove it. Grab the bug with tweezers, and pull it straight out. Your risk of Lyme disease is greatly reduced if a tick is attached to your skin for less than 24 hours.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; National Institutes of Health; U.S. Food and Drug Administration

numbers to know



1 BILLION

The number of pollen grains a single ragweed plant can produce. Ragweed is a common cause of hay fever in most states.

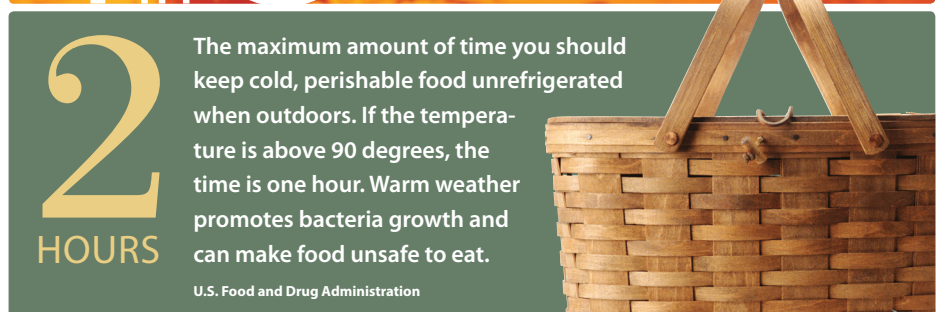
American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology



15 in

The number of Americans who will be diagnosed with skin cancer in their lifetime. Regular use of a broad-spectrum sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 or higher may protect your skin.

American Academy of Dermatology



2 HOURS

The maximum amount of time you should keep cold, perishable food unrefrigerated when outdoors. If the temperature is above 90 degrees, the time is one hour. Warm weather promotes bacteria growth and can make food unsafe to eat.

U.S. Food and Drug Administration

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Vibrant Health

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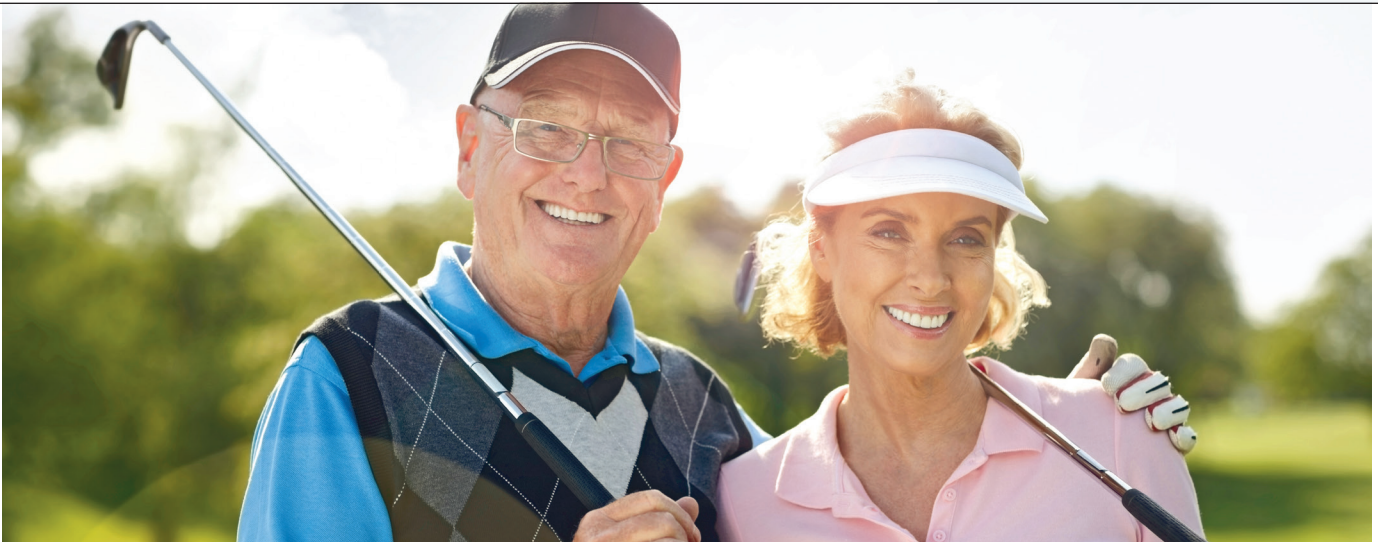
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