



HEALTHY LIVING SECTION

Weekly tips and advice from your neighborhood Carolinas HealthCare System Blue Ridge providers.



What's the Difference Between a Heart Attack and a Stroke?

Heart disease is the number one cause of death in the United States, with stroke being the fourth. However, stroke is the leading cause of disability.

This is why it is crucial to immediately seek medical attention if you think you or someone with you might be having a heart attack or stroke. Treatment is available that, in many cases, can save lives and decrease the risk of disability by reducing permanent damage to the heart or brain.

What Is a Heart Attack?

A heart attack, also called a myocardial infarction, occurs when blood flow to a portion of the heart muscle is severely reduced or cut off completely. This usually occurs when the coronary arteries, which supply blood flow and oxygen to the heart muscle, narrow over time from buildup of blood, cholesterol or other fats, and other substances, which eventually form deposits called plaque.

If this plaque breaks, blood clots form around the plaque, blocking off the blood flow to the heart muscle. If the artery stays closed long enough, that part of the heart muscle is damaged and results in a heart attack.

Symptoms of a Heart Attack

The most common symptoms associated with a heart attack include chest pain or discomfort (pressure, squeezing, or fullness); pain or discomfort in the jaws, shoulders, arms, neck or back; and shortness of breath, nausea, sweating or lightheadedness. All of these symptoms do not need to be present and can occur in any combination.

If you have these symptoms, even if you are not sure it is a heart attack, getting to a hospital as soon as possible is crucial. If you really are having a heart attack, the sooner you get to the hospital, the better chance treatment can be started that limits the amount of heart muscle damage and maybe saves your life.

What's a Stroke?

A stroke occurs when a blood vessel leading to or within the brain is either blocked by a clot or bursts. When this happens that part of the brain does not receive the blood and oxygen it needs to function and starts to die. Depending on which part of the brain is involved and the amount of damaged brain tissue, the resulting disability can include difficulty with speech, vision, or memory, or even paralysis.

Symptoms of a Stroke

Warning signs include sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body; sudden confusion; trouble speaking or understanding; sudden difficulty seeing; sudden trouble walking or loss of balance; or sudden severe headache with no known cause. If these symptoms occur, immediately call 911 so that trained emergency staff can quickly provide transport to the hospital.

For certain types of strokes, there is a clot-busting medication called tissue plasminogen activator, or TPA, which when given within three hours of the onset of symptoms, may reduce long-term disability.

Southwestern Quinoa and Egg Breakfast Bowl *Serves: 4*

- 1/4 cup raw quinoa
- 1/2 avocado, pitted and diced
- 2 medium tomatoes, chopped (about 2 cups)
- 1 cup frozen corn (thawed)
- 1/4 cup green onions, chopped
- 1/2 cup cilantro (optional)
- 4 eggs
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
- hot sauce (optional)

Cook quinoa per the package directions. Remove from heat and let sit.

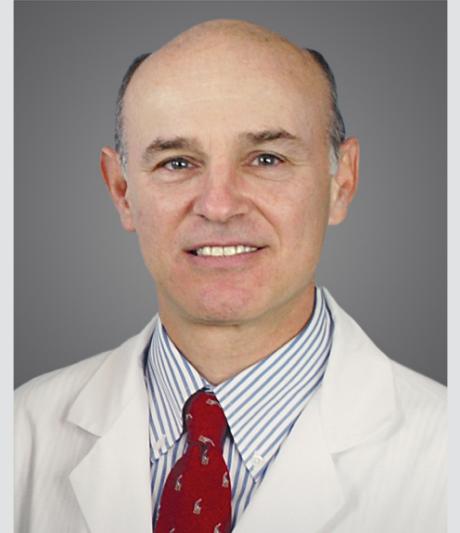
Prepare the remaining ingredients. Pit and dice the avocado, chop the tomatoes, rinse the corn, chop the green onions, and chop the cilantro, if desired.

Divide quinoa between 4 bowls. Arrange the avocado, tomatoes, corn, green onions, and cilantro in each bowl.

Coat a large nonstick skillet with cooking spray and warm over medium-high heat. Crack each egg into the skillet and season with salt and pepper. Cover with a lid and cook until the eggs are sunny side up (whites are set, but yolk is runny). Transfer each egg to a bowl and garnish with hot sauce and serve.



By consuming two to three servings of quinoa or other whole grains each day, you can reduce your risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, colon cancer and obesity.



Help Out Your Heart

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Responsible for pumping blood throughout your body to carry nutrients and eliminate waste, the heart is without a doubt your most important muscle. It works tirelessly to accomplish its mission of sustaining life. Unfortunately, humans have developed all too many habits of making that mission more difficult than it needs to be. Thanks to smoking, unhealthy eating habits, and not exercising, heart conditions have become the leading cause of death in the United States.

Due to a lack of care, your heart becomes susceptible to numerous conditions that negatively affect your ability to lead a healthy life. Coronary artery disease (CAD) is the most common one. You can develop CAD when LDL or "bad" cholesterol builds up plaque in your arteries. This makes it more difficult to effectively pump blood and increases the risk of blood clots forming, which can block arteries and cause a heart attack.

The next two most common conditions are heart failure and arrhythmia. Heart failure is the most common reason for hospitalization. It happens after a weak heart or a heart that has become rigid causes shortness of breath during activity and creates fluid retention. Arrhythmia is when your heart beats irregularly. It can skip beats and beat too slow or fast. Damage to your heart isn't the only cause of arrhythmia though; certain medications and supplements can also cause it as a side effect.

Thankfully, the heart is a resilient muscle, and with proper treatment and lifestyle changes can recover from some, if not all, of the damage on it. This is why it is important to regularly visit your doctor and to discuss any unusual heart-related experiences you have, such as tightness or pain in the chest and difficulty breathing, as soon as possible. This is particularly true if any of the following risk factors apply to you: high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, or smoking, or being overweight, physically inactive, having a family history of heart disease, and being of a more advanced age.

Dedicate yourself to helping your heart function at peak performance. Start by having a conversation with your doctor to develop a plan to work on your health issues. He or she will be able to advise you regarding habits to break, behaviors to start and a plan to implement changes. If you have any questions, please call us at 828-580-4230.

Stop the Damage Before It's Too Late

As with many health conditions, exercising, losing weight, quitting smoking, and developing healthy eating habits are excellent ways to improve or maintain heart health.

