Stroke Awareness Month
Wellness Challenge

Please consult your health care provider before beginning a new exercise routine.
Day 1

UNC Stroke Program's

May 1st Wellness Challenge

Today's Challenge is Tai Chi! Tai Chi is a low-impact, slow-motion mind-body practice. Did you know that Tai Chi can also have benefits for stroke survivors? It can help with activities of daily living, balance, limb motor function, and walking.

New to Tai Chi?

Check out the videos from UNC Wellness Centers on Tai Chi
As an alternative for stroke survivors with mobility limitations,
check out the video from UNC Wellness Centers on chair yoga.

As always, please consult your medical provider before starting any new exercise programs.

Resources

UNC Wellness Center's Tai Chi video
UNC Wellness Center’s Chair Yoga Video
Day 2

UNC Stroke Program’s

May 2nd Wellness Challenge

Today’s Challenge is stretching! For stroke survivors, stretching can have the benefits of helping to prevent joint contractures and muscle shortening, decrease spasticity, reduce joint stiffness and improve a post-stroke patient’s overall function. For everyone, stretching can help with tension and stress relief, posture and injury prevention.

Need inspiration to begin a stretching routine?
Check out UNC Wellness Center’s stretching exercises for everyone video.

Are you a stroke survivor with mobility limitations?
Check out the seated stretching exercises from the American Heart Association.

As always, please consult your medical provider before starting any new exercise programs.

Resources

UNC Wellness Center’s Stretching for Everyone video

American Heart Association’s Seated Stretching and Flexibility activities
May 3rd Wellness Challenge

Today’s Challenge is make a healthy meal plan for the week! The easiest way to incorporate healthy food choices is to plan ahead. A healthy lifestyle that incorporates healthy eating is one of the ways to prevent stroke and heart attack!

Need help deciding what to include in your plan?
Check out the American Heart Association’s Diet and Lifestyle Guide.

Need some recipe ideas?
Check out these heart healthy options from the American Heart Association.

Need some tips for grocery shopping during the COVID-19 pandemic?
Check out UNC Wellness Center’s tips.

Resources

American Heart Association’s Diet and Lifestyle Guide
American Heart Association’s Heart Check Certified Recipes
Grocery Shopping Tips During the Pandemic
Day 4

UNC Stroke Program's

May 4th Wellness Challenge

Today's Challenge is gratitude!

Did you know that a shift in your thought process towards optimism can have benefits for both the body and the mind? The practice of gratitude can help with lowering blood pressure, boosting your immune system and provide motivation for healthy eating and exercise.

Need help getting started with the practice of gratitude? Check out the American Heart Association's Thankfulness Guide

Resources

American Heart Association's Thankfulness Guide
May 5th Wellness Challenge

Today’s Challenge is **core strengthening**!

Did you know that strong core muscles can improve balance and can make you feel more steady on your feet? For all of us, including stroke survivors, a strong core is one important part of preventing falls.

**New to core exercise?**
Start by trying to incorporate 15 sit-ups into your routine today.

**Looking for something with a little higher intensity?**
Check out UNC Wellness Center’s Core Conditioning video.

**Are you a stroke survivor with mobility limitations?**
Check out UNC Wellness Center's Seated PWR Workout video or The American Heart Association's At-Home Exercises for Stroke Survivors

As always, please consult your medical provider before starting any new exercise programs.
**Unc Stroke Program's**

**May 6th Wellness Challenge**

Today's Challenge is **Staying Hydrated!**

Did you know that staying well hydrated can make it easier for your heart to pump blood? As temperatures begin to rise, it is even more important to pay attention to your body's level of hydration. Drinking water is the best way to give your body the hydration it needs.

**Interested in learning how to tell if your body is well hydrated?**

The amount of hydration you need can be different for everyone and can vary based on the temperature outside. Check out the American Heart Association's article on staying hydrated to learn more.

**Are you someone who tends to drink sugary drinks?**

Use today's challenge to replace your sugary drinks with water. Try adding a slice or two of fresh fruit if you're looking for additional flavor. If you're used to carbonation in your drink, give seltzer water a try.

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**Resources**

- AHA Guide on Staying Hydrated
- AHA Guide on “Rethinking Your Drink”
Day 7

UNC Stroke Program's

May 7th Wellness Challenge

Today's Challenge is Strength and Resistance Activity!

A well-rounded workout routine includes strength and resistance, endurance, balance and flexibility. Adding variety into your workout routine not only avoids the boredom that can come with exercise, but the variation in types of exercise can help your overall body and cardiovascular wellness. Today's challenge focuses on incorporating strength and resistance training into your exercise routine. This can mean using weights or the resistance from your own body weight to improve strength.

Interested in learning more about strength training? Check out the American Heart Associations page on strength and resistance.

Need some inspiration to get started with strength training? Check out UNC Wellness Center's Body Weight Strength Training Video

Are you a stroke survivor with mobility limitations? Check out the list of post-stroke exercises from the American Heart Association

As always, please consult your medical provider before starting any new exercise programs.
UNC Stroke Program's

May 8th Wellness Challenge

Today's Challenge is Dancing!

Dancing can be a fun, easy way to burn some calories and can help with increasing your strength, coordination and balance. Dancing can have benefits for people of all ages and it's can be an easy, fun activity to get kids involved with! So, clear some space, turn on the music and have some fun with today's challenge!

Need some inspiration to get started?
Check out UNC Wellness Center's Dance Fusion workout routine.

Are you a stroke survivor with mobility limitations?
Check out the seated chair dance routine video.

As always, please consult your medical provider before starting any new exercise programs.
Day 9

UNC Stroke Program's

May 9th Wellness Challenge

Today's Challenge is to learn something new!

Learning a new skill can be a fun and interesting way to combat the boredom of social distancing. Did you know that learning something new can also be good for your brain health? It can help with making connections in your brain stronger and may help with improving memory.

Need some motivation to get started?
Check out the great work of one of our local non-profit organizations, Inspiration Golf, is doing to adapt the game for stroke survivors. Check out inspirationgolf.com to learn more.

Also check out uncwellness.com/services/videos for other ideas (chair yoga, tai chi, mindfulness and so much more!)

As always, please consult your medical provider before starting any new exercise or activity programs.

Resources

Inspiration Golf

Stroke Survivor Inspiration Golf Video

UNC Wellness Center Videos including chair yoga, meditation, healthy cooking and Tai Chi
Day 10

UNC Stroke Program's

May 10th Wellness Challenge

Today's Challenge is to get a good nights sleep!

Did you know? According to the American Heart Association, "exercise and eating nutritious foods aren’t the only things that can help increase heart health; sleep is also a factor. The better night’s sleep you get, the healthier your heart will be". Bad sleep habits can put you at increased risk for high blood pressure. High blood pressure is the most common modifiable risk factor for stroke. The amount of sleep needed may vary from person to person, but on average, 7-9 hours a night is recommended.

Need some ideas to get some more Zzz's?
Here are some tips from the American Heart Association:

* Do your best to get enough exercise during the day
* Avoid extra caffeine, especially before bedtime
* Practice good 'sleep hygiene': turn off electronics before bed, start a calming bedtime routine that helps you to wind down and reduce the stress of the day,

Need more information?
Check out the American Heart Association's tips on sleep to learn more.
As always, please consult your medical provider before starting any new exercise or activity programs.

Resources

Sleep Tips from the American Heart Association
Day 11

UNC Stroke Program’s

May 11th Wellness Challenge

Today’s Challenge is 30 minutes of aerobic activity!

Aerobic or endurance exercise is one of the four key components of a well-balanced workout routine. Variety in your exercise routine can help keep it exciting and reduce boredom. Aerobic activity can improve your cardiovascular health and, over time, decrease your risk of stroke and heart disease. The American Heart Association recommends that adults “get at least 150 minutes (2 1/2 hours) of moderate to vigorous activity per week”.

Need some help getting started?
Walking is an easy aerobic activity to incorporate into your daily routine. Check out the American Heart Association’s six-week beginner walking program for an easy way to get started!

Are you a stroke survivor with mobility limitations?
Check out UNC Wellness Center’s Seated PWR workout or The American Heart Association’s At-Home Exercises for Stroke Survivors.

As always, please consult your medical provider before starting any new exercise or activity programs.

Resources

UNC Medical Center’s Physical Therapy Video with exercise adaptations for stroke survivors
Day 12

UNC Stroke Program's
May 12th Wellness Challenge

Today's Challenge is to eat your veggies!

The American Heart Association recommends a healthy diet and lifestyle to reduce your risk of heart disease and stroke. A healthy diet includes a variety of foods including nutrient-rich vegetables. Today's challenge is to make sure you are incorporating vegetables into your diet.

Need some help getting started?
Try adding one vegetable into each of your meals today. Not a fan of vegetables? Try shredding and adding them into a meal - you can eat them with out even noticing them! You can also try blending them into a heart healthy smoothie.

Have fun adding a little more color to your meals today!

Resources
American Heart Association's article on how to incorporate more fruits and vegetables into your diet
Day 13

UNC Stroke Program’s
May 13th Wellness Challenge

Today's Challenge is to read for 30 minutes!

Reading can be a quick and easy way to wind down after a stressful day. Did you know that reading as a part of your bedtime routine can help calm your mind and reduce your stress? Reading can decrease your stress by 50% in about 6 minutes (AHA, 2018).

Are you a stroke survivor that has difficulty with reading since the stroke? Check out the Reading Rehabilitation tips from the American Heart Association.

Curing this time of social distancing, remember:
"Reading gives us someplace to go when we have to stay where we are"
-Mason Cooley
May 14th Wellness Challenge

Today’s Challenge is to do 15 squats!

Adding squats, as a part of your strength and resistance exercises, can add variety to your workout routine. Regular exercise can also help to improve your overall wellness and reduce your risk for heart disease and stroke. For stroke survivors, squatting can help with balance and leg strength which can help reduce your risk of falling.

Need some help getting started?
Check out the squatting for beginners video.

Are you a stroke survivor that has mobility limitations?
Check out the video from April Xayavong, PT with UNC Physical Therapy demonstrating squatting for stroke survivors.

As always, consult your health care provider before beginning a new workout routine.
Day 15

**UNC Stroke Program's**

**May 15th Wellness Challenge**

Today's Challenge is **gratitude**!

- Take 2 minutes today to list the positive things that your body is doing for you. Keep this list and when you are frustrated or feeling down, pull it out and remind yourself of all the good things your body is doing!

Earlier in our challenge, we learned that a shift in your thought process towards optimism can have benefits for both the body and the mind. Our first challenge invited you to think about things you were thankful for. Today's exercise challenges you to use gratitude in a different way - helping you to shift your mindset from the negative to the positive can set you up for success!

**Resources**

[American Heart Association's gratitude challenge](#)
May 16th Wellness Challenge
Today's Challenge is to reduce your stress!

Some stress is good for our bodies, but most of us have a lot of unnecessary stress in our lives. Negative stress can cause increased blood pressure, cholesterol and may cause you to be less active and overeat. This can increase your risk for stroke.

For today's challenge, choose one of these stress-lowering activities to get started:
- Take a relaxing bath
- Color or do an art project
- Take a walk or hike outside
- Yoga or Tai Chi
- Practice a mindfulness activity
- Garden
- Read a book
- Journal

Are you a stroke survivor?
Did you know that a local non-profit organization, Triangle Aphasia Project Unlimited, offers services for stroke survivors with communication difficulties? Their group services include many things on our list above - book clubs, writing groups and even a gardening club! Check out aphasiaproject.org to learn more!
Day 17

UNC Stroke Program's
May 17th Wellness Challenge

Today's Challenge is push ups!

Push ups can help build upper body and core strength. Increasing the number of push-ups you can do at one time is a good way to improve cardiovascular health and challenge yourself.

Need some help getting started?
Whether you are new to push ups or you are a stroke survivor with mobility limitations, push ups are an exercise that is easy to modify and adapt to your fitness or mobility level. Check out the article on 15 ways to modify a push up or the video on seated push ups to learn more!

As always, please consult your health care provider before beginning a new exercise routine.
May 18th Wellness Challenge

Today's Challenge is to try a new leafy green!

According to the American Heart Association, "Most greens are packed with nutrients, vitamins, and minerals so these leaves are great to heap onto your plate". A heart healthy diet can reduce your risk of heart disease and stroke.

Need some help getting started?
Try your greens in a healthy salad or sneak them into a smoothie. Check out the recipes from the American Heart Association to get inspired to try something new!

Resources

American Heart Association’s Recipes:

- Pork & Green Onion Tacos
- Lasagna
- Kid Friendly Green Monster Smoothie
Day 19

May 19th Wellness Challenge

Today’s Challenge is to **cook something new**!

A healthy diet starts with good food choices. What better way to reduce your stroke risk that to try something new, nutritious and delicious today!

**Need some help getting started?**
Try adding a new fresh herb to your dish. Herbs are a great way to add flavor without adding calories or salt to a meal. Check out the article from the American Heart Association to learn more.

Need something quick and easy to try? Check out the video on how to make a salad in a jar or one-pot tortellini for a quick and healthy meal ideas!

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Resources

- Salad in a Jar
- Cooking with Herbs
- Kid Friendly One-Pot Tortellini
**UNC Stroke Program’s**

**May 20th Wellness Challenge**

Today’s Challenge is to **create a home circuit workout routine!**

A home circuit exercise routine can be an easy, fun way to make sure you have variety in your workout routine! A circuit routine alternates cardio and strength exercises in short intervals. One of the benefit of a circuit is that you can alternate the types of exercises so you don’t get bored with your routine! When done regularly, it can also reduce your risk of heart disease and stroke.

**Need some help getting started?**
Check out the ‘Choose Your Own Workout’ infographic from The American Heart Association to begin!

**Are you a stroke survivor?**
Check out the ‘At Home Exercises for Stroke Survivors’ videos from the American Heart Association

As always, check with your health care provider before beginning a new exercise routine.

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**Resources**

- Building Your Own Home Circuit
- At Home Exercises for Stroke Survivors
- Squat’s with UNC Medical Center’s April, PT
- Aerobic activity with UNC Medical Center’s Audrey, PT and Sharon, PT
- Strength Training with Hillary, OT and Tracy, OTA
May 21st Wellness Challenge

Today’s Challenge is to eliminate soda!

If you drink soda, it may be contributing to extra calories and sugar in your diet which can increase your risk for stroke and heart disease. There is even some evidence that shows that diet drinks can increase stroke risk in post-menopausal women. If you are someone who drinks a lot of soda, and you don’t feel like you can eliminate it, try cutting your intake in half today to get started. Then, keep decreasing the amount you drink until you have eliminated it.

Need some help getting started?
Check out the tips from the American Heart Association on Rethinking Your Drink to get started!
Day 22

**UNC Stroke Program’s**

May 22nd Wellness Challenge

Today’s Challenge is to have a technology free evening!

Especially in kids, technology with screens, such as smartphones, tablets and televisions can promote a sedentary lifestyle. For all of us, limiting technology before bedtime can help you get a better nights sleep. For today’s challenge, let’s eliminate the screens for an evening and do something fun and active in it's place!

**Need some help getting started?**
Check out the article The American Heart Association on how to get your family active for some activity ideas!
Day 23

UNC Stroke Program’s
May 23rd Wellness Challenge

Today's Challenge is to try a 20 second plank!

A 'Plank' is a yoga pose designed to strengthen your core abdominal muscles as well as your shoulder, chest, neck, glute, quadriceps, and back muscles. Over time, this can help with improving your overall strength, posture, balance and reduce your risk of falling.

Need some help getting started?
Check out the article on 'How to do a Perfect Plank'

Are you a stroke survivor?
Check out some of these ways you can modify the plank while still getting benefits from the exercise:
Chair Plank Video
Wall Plank Video

As always, please consult your health care provider before you start a new exercise routine.

Resources
How to do a Perfect Plank
Chair Plank
Wall Plank
Day 24

UNC Stroke Program’s

May 24th Wellness Challenge

Today's Challenge is to try a puzzle or board game that challenges you!

Puzzles and board games can help with hand-eye coordination and cognitive skills like problem solving, short-term memory and pattern recognition. You may even have a little fun and laugh which can improve your overall well being and feeling of happiness!

Need some help getting started?
Check out the videos on how to play chess, connect four and solitaire

Resources

Chess
Connect Four
Checkers
Solitaire
Day 25

UNC Stroke Program’s

May 25th Wellness Challenge

Today’s Challenge is to jumping jacks!

Jumping jacks are a good aerobic exercise that engage your abdominal, glutes, quadriceps, shoulders and hip flexor muscles. If you’re bored with walking outside or running on a treadmill, jumping jacks are a good alternative to add variety in your workout routine and get your heart pumping!

Need some help getting started?
Check out the video on ‘20 Jumping Jack Variations’ for ideas on different ways to modify the jumping jack to make it lower or higher impact depending on your ability.

Are you a stroke survivor with mobility limitations?
Jumping jacks can also be done seated. Check out the videos on chair jumping jacks to learn more!

As always, please consult your healthcare provider before you start a new exercise routine.

Resources

20 Jumping Jack Variations

Seated Jumping Jacks (1)

Seated Jumping Jacks (2)
Day 26

UNC Stroke Program’s
May 26th Wellness Challenge

Today’s Challenge is to try 10 minutes of meditation!

Practicing meditation can have many benefits including reducing stress, anxiety, improved concentration and can even help to lower your blood pressure. It is not a substitute, but a great addition to the other healthy living practices we’ve learned about during this wellness challenge such as healthy eating and regular exercise.

Need some help getting started?
Check out the guided meditation videos from UNC Wellness Centers to get started.
Day 27

**UNC Stroke Program's**

**May 27th Wellness Challenge**

Today's Challenge is **to know your stroke risk!**

According to the American Heart Association, if you are between 40 and 75 years of age, you can use the online “Check. Change. Control Calculator”. This calculator takes less than 5 minutes and can give you an estimate of your risk of heart attack or stroke. Having an awareness of what your risk factors are for stroke is the first step in preventing it.

**Check out the AHA's "Check.Change.Control Calculator" here:**

https://cccalculator.ccctracker.com/
Day 28

UNC Stroke Program's

May 28th Wellness Challenge

Today's Challenge is to try 10 lunges!

Lunges can help make your back, hips and legs stronger. They can also help with improving mobility and stability which can decrease your risk of falling.

Need some help getting started?
Check out the video on how to do a lunge.

Do you have joint/knee issues?
Check out the video on how to modify squats and lunges

Are you a stroke survivor?
Check out the video on the mini-lunge post-stroke exercise or single leg mini squats with support as an alternative

As always, consult a health care provider before starting a new exercise routine.

Resources

How to do a lunge

How to modify squats and lunges

Post Stroke Mini-Lunge

Single Leg Mini-Squats with Support
Day 29

UNC Stroke Program’s
May 29th Wellness Challenge

Today’s Challenge is to reach out to a friend you haven’t talked to in a while!

Did you know? There are many mind and body benefits for people with strong social support including lower risk of depressive symptoms, better quality of life, and possibly even a lower risk of early mortality.

Interested in learning more?
Check out the article on ‘7 Ways Friendships are Great for your Health’ featuring Yang Claire Yang, a professor in the UNC Chapel Hill Department of Sociology.
May 30th Wellness Challenge

Today’s Challenge is to try the 10-minute home workout!

The 10-minute workout can be an easy way to squeeze in some exercise that can help you think clearer and feel better! This is a great alternative to keep moving and increase your heart rate even when you are really busy.

Learn more about the American Heart Association’s 10-minute home workout at:
heart.org/movefor10

As always, check with your healthcare provider before starting a new exercise routine.
Day 31

UNC Stroke Program's
May 31st Wellness Challenge

Today's Challenge is to know the American Heart Association's 8 things you can do to prevent a stroke:

1. Know your risk
2. Eat a healthy diet
3. Be physically active
4. Watch your weight
5. Live tobacco-free
6. Manage your chronic conditions like high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes
7. Take your medications as directed by your health care provider
8. Be a team player - work with your health care team to reduce your risk

If you’re not following all of these 8 things, find a way to incorporate them into your daily routine to reduce your risk of stroke.