

stroke may be increased if one or more of your close relatives have been diagnosed with a brain aneurysm (ruptured or unruptured) or have suffered a brain hemorrhage.

**Be aware of unruptured aneurysms.** Aneurysms are being discovered prior to rupture more frequently in recent years because of widespread use of computed tomography (CT) and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scans for other conditions.

If you have an unruptured aneurysm, consult an expert to determine whether or not it should be repaired. The risk for rupture depends on the size and location of the unruptured aneurysm and whether or not a person has had an SAH from a previous aneurysm. Recent studies have indicated that the risk for rupture of many of these aneurysms is lower than the risk associated with repair.

**Reduce stress.** Acute stress can trigger sudden spikes in blood pressure, which increase your risk for SAH. Prolonged stress may lead to chronic hypertension, heightening your risk for ICH.

The best way to reduce stress is to exercise daily and practice relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing or meditation, and/or scale back your workload if you're feeling overwhelmed.

**Avoid strenuous isometric exercise.** Isometric exercise, which involves tensing muscles (often against a resistant object, such as a weight or a wall), can cause sharp spikes in blood pressure. It generally is not recommended for people who have heart disease, high blood pressure or unruptured aneurysms. Aerobic exercise, such as walking, biking or swimming, is generally beneficial to your health. Consult your doctor before starting any exercise program.

**Don't smoke.** Scientific studies have linked smoking to the development of brain aneurysms. Secondhand smoke is a suspected culprit, as well. 🍎

Bradley J. Willcox, MD, University of Hawaii

## Live Longer And Feel Great

The simple anti-aging strategy of centenarians.



It is possible to eat more and live longer. Just ask the Okinawans.

In 2000, my brother and I (both of us researchers at Harvard Medical School at the time) pored over 50 years of research on the inhabitants of Okinawa, a chain of islands in Japan that touts the world's highest concentration of centenarians.

We discovered that their rates of killer diseases, such as cancer, heart disease and stroke, are among the lowest in the world, largely because of their diet, physical activity and close family relationships.

**Now:** New analysis of dietary data has uncovered additional details on the Okinawans' healthful eating habits.

### CALORIC DENSITY

Foods differ in the ratio of calories to weight. The more calories per gram (or ounce) a food contains, the more fattening it will be. This principle is known as caloric density (CD).

*Here's the trick:* If you consume two to three pounds of food a day, you'll probably feel satisfied. This is true whether the food contains 2,100 calories (as it will if you eat like most Americans) or 1,600 calories (as it will if you eat the low-CD Okinawan way).

That's because humans are programmed to eat a set amount of food—not just a quota of calories. Okinawans actually eat *more* than Americans—an average of

2.5 pounds a day versus two pounds for Americans.

The traditional Okinawan diet includes some foods familiar in America (such as sweet potatoes and watermelon)...some that have made inroads into many American kitchens (such as tofu and shiitake mushrooms)...and others that might require a sense of adventure and a trip to a specialty-food store, including daikon (Japanese radish), adzuki beans and edible seaweed, such as wakame and hijiki.

### GO THREE TO ONE

It isn't only what's in the Okinawan diet that counts—it's also the proportions. Animal products have higher CDs than vegetables, fruits, legumes and grains.

*Just follow this easy rule:* Eat at least three times more plant-based foods than meats and seafood or dairy products.

*Another three-to-one rule applies to your plant-based foods:* Eat three times more "featherweight" plant-based foods than denser ones. A featherweight food contains fewer than 0.7 calories per gram.

**Example:** Eat plenty of fresh strawberries, grapefruit, broccoli, carrot sticks and cantaloupe... and as much tofu, salsa, vegetable

*Bottom Line/Health* interviewed Bradley J. Willcox, MD, clinical assistant professor of geriatrics at the University of Hawaii and physician-scientist at Pacific Health Research Institute, which conducts research on aging and chronic disease, both in Honolulu. He is coauthor of *The Okinawa Diet Plan: Get Leaner, Live Longer, and Never Feel Hungry* (Clarkson Potter).





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soup, fat-free cottage cheese and low-fat plain yogurt as you want. But have smaller portions of high-CD foods, such as bread (even if it's whole wheat) and nuts.

#### GET ENOUGH PROTEIN

Because protein is vital to maintaining all the cells, muscles and other tissues of the body, nature made this nutrient more satisfying than fats or sugars. Without sufficient protein—no matter how much fat and sugar you eat—you'll still be hungry. Adults should get 0.4 g of protein per pound of body weight daily.

**Example:** A 180-pound man needs 72 g of protein per day.

Once you adopt a low-CD diet and your calorie intake drops, you'll be eating a higher proportion of protein. Meat is a rich source, but it comes packaged with fat. Fish is less calorie-dense, and its fats are healthful omega-3s.

**Helpful:** Get most of your protein from plant sources, such as legumes and grains, and the rest from fish. Soy, a legume, is particularly valuable. It contains all the necessary amino acids.

#### KEEP FIBER IN MIND

Fiber, the nondigestible substance found in plants, adds bulk without calories to foods—so the more fiber, the lower the CD. High-fiber foods keep the edge off your appetite longer.

**Bonus:** Fiber aids digestion and reduces cholesterol. The phytonutrients (plant-based chemicals) found in fiber appear to lower the risks for cancer and diabetes.

The easiest way to increase your fiber intake is to start the day with a breakfast cereal that contains at least 5 g per serving.

**Also:** Substitute whole-wheat bread and pasta and brown rice for refined grain products. Add high-fiber beans and lentils to salads.

#### CHOOSE WATER-RICH FOODS

Like fiber, water adds volume without calories. Foods with high

water content fill you up just as effectively as those loaded with fats and sugars.

To decrease the CD of your meals, water must be in the food.

*To add more water to your daily diet...*

- Start meals with soup whenever possible.

- Steam vegetables rather than baking or grilling them, to keep their water content high.

- Eat water-rich stew as a main dish. (For a delicious stew recipe, turn to page 12.)

#### EAT FREQUENT MEALS

Six small meals and snacks a day will keep your energy level up and your hunger down. You eat less, overall, when you graze rather than gorge.

**Especially important:** Never skip breakfast. A healthy, high-fiber morning meal that includes some protein, such as yogurt, makes it easier to resist fatty, sugary foods throughout the day.

#### DON'T DEPRIVE YOURSELF

Completely swearing off foods you really love won't work in the long run—sooner or later, cravings win out.

**Instead:** Meet yourself halfway. Eat just half a pastrami sandwich, and cut the meal's CD with vegetables. Finish with fresh fruit.

If you feel the urge for sweets, have a piece of hard candy. Drink hot cocoa to satisfy your chocolate craving—an eight-ounce serving has a low CD of about 120 calories, while a 1.5-ounce chocolate bar has about 220. 🍎

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