



## Senior Focus

A Guide to Healthy Living  
For Seniors & Others



# Are you at higher risk for having a life-changing stroke?

STATEPOINT - Lead scorer of the University of Pittsburgh women's basketball team, Latia Howard was being recruited by the WNBA and at the top of her game. But that all changed after she suffered a stroke at just 21 years old. Early one morning, Howard began experiencing weakness in her arm and leg. While she decided to skip practice that day, she didn't think too much of it. When her roommate told her trainer why Howard wasn't

at practice and what she was experiencing, he called her and noticed she didn't sound right on the phone. He went straight to her apartment, and after realizing something was very wrong, he immediately called 911 and she was rushed to the emergency room. According to the American Stroke Association, African Americans have a higher prevalence of stroke and the highest death rate from stroke than any other racial group. Among stroke

survivors, African Americans are more likely to be disabled and have difficulties doing daily activities. A star athlete before her life-changing stroke, not only was Howard unable to play basketball afterward, she had to re-learn how to walk and talk and went through extensive physical therapy, falling into a depression. The stroke forced Howard to re-imagine her goal of being a professional basketball player. She shifted her dream of playing in the



Courtesy StatePoint  
**Star basketball player, Latia Howard, suffered a life-changing stroke at 21.**

WNBA to coaching young, up-and-coming basketball

players. "I am grateful I am here and can share my story," says Howard, who, now 43, is an educator and basketball coach. "I encourage my team to always give 100% because at one time in my life, I couldn't give anything." A testament to the fact that stroke can happen to anyone, of any age, at any time, Howard encourages everyone to know their body, so they can recognize when something feels different or wrong. "When it comes to stroke, every moment counts," she says. "A person could lose everything to stroke, so it's important to call 911 the moment something seems off." The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that almost half of African Americans have at least one risk factor for stroke, including manageable conditions like high blood pressure and diabetes, as well as genetic conditions like sickle cell disease. That is why it's important for everyone to be aware of their risk factors and learn the signs to watch. According to experts, immediate medi-

cal attention is vital when it comes to stroke and relies on everyone learning and being able to recognize the BE FAST signs and symptoms of a stroke in themselves and others and calling 911 immediately. BE FAST stands for Balance, Eyes, Face, Arm, Speech, Time and refers to these signs of stroke: • Balance: Sudden loss of balance • Eyes: Loss of vision in one or both eyes • Face: Face looks uneven or droopy • Arm: Arm or leg is weak or hanging down • Speech: Slurred speech, trouble speaking or seems confused • Time: Immediately call 911. For more information and resources, visit [StrokeAwareness.com](http://StrokeAwareness.com), developed by Genentech Inc, a member of the Roche Group.

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## How to use medical patches safely

83-year-old Ethel asked me, "Is it okay to go water-walking while wearing my pain patch? I don't want it to come off in the water."

"Where are you applying it?"

"On my stomach."

"That should be fine, as long as you avoid putting it where your waistband could rub against it. Whenever you apply a patch, you'll want to make sure your clothing doesn't touch it in a way that could eventually peel it off."

Patches are easy and convenient. They offer a way to get several days of medicine at a time instead of needing to take a pill multiple times a day. An increasing number of prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) medicines are available as pills and as patches.

There are prescription-only patches for birth control, hormone replacement, high blood pressure, Attention Deficit Disorder, motion sickness, chest pain, dementia, and pain.

Some patches don't require a prescription. You can purchase patches containing nicotine to help you quit smoking and patches to help relieve irritable or overactive bladder symptoms, called Oxytrol®. Several types of analgesic patches are available OTC, including ones with nearly as much lidocaine as their more expensive, prescription-only counterparts.

Most patches are designed to deliver the same amount of medicine, hour after hour. Compared to pills or liquid medication, patches begin working slowly, their effects building up over time. It can take several days for the full impact of a patch to be experienced.

After removing a patch, the medication continues traveling into your body for several hours afterward, and its effects taper off slowly unless another patch is applied.

The potency of a patch is directly related to how much surface area touches your skin. The bigger the patch, the greater the amount that is delivered to your body. This relationship makes it very tempting to adjust the dose of medicine by cutting the patch. Unfortunately, this practice can be dangerous to do with certain types of patches.

Most medication patches use either a reservoir or a



matrix delivery system for their active ingredient. A reservoir patch contains a liquid or gel-like reservoir of concentrated medicine inside, designed to deliver medication at a controlled rate as long as it stays intact.

Suppose a reservoir-type patch gets torn or is cut. When that happens, the potent medicine in the liquid or gel can leak out of the patch onto the skin, dramatically increasing the amount of medicine absorbed and creating an overdose.

A matrix patch incorporates its active ingredient into the adhesive layer of the patch. This allows some matrix-type patches to be cut to adjust the amount of medicine delivered, unlike the reservoir-type patch.

One of the most significant advantages of taking medicine as a patch is delivering a consistent dose of medicine over an extended period. With a patch, you could apply one every 3 days instead of taking a pill every day.

By delivering its medicine into your bloodstream through your skin, patches completely bypass your stomach, which can reduce stomach upset.

Some disadvantages of using a medicated patch include itching and burning from a reaction to the patch's adhesive, a delay in experiencing the effects of the medicine due to the slower delivery system, and a higher cost compared to an equivalent dose of a pill.

**Here Are 10 Tips on Using Medication Patches Safely:**

**1. Keep track of the time or date you apply a patch.**

Most patches need to be removed or replaced at specific intervals. Nitroglycerin patches need to be removed for 8-12 hours every day, or they stop working.

**2. Don't double up.**

ALWAYS remove your old patch before applying a new one.

**3. Apply only to recommended areas, and rotate the site.**

Watch for restrictions on where the patch should NOT be placed, and always choose a different spot for the next one you apply.

**4. Apply to clean, dry, and (mostly) hairless areas.**

Avoid applying patches to broken or irritated skin. This can increase the absorption of the medicine in the patch, creating an overdose.

**5. Avoid areas that rub against clothing.**

Keep patches from being peeled off by avoiding applying them to areas that rub against clothing, like waistbands or edges of sleeves.

**6. Remove any inner liners before applying.**

Once you remove the outer wrapper, an inner liner may need to be peeled off before you apply it. If you don't do this, the patch will not work correctly.

**7. Avoid cutting or tearing.**

If you need to adjust a patch's dose, check with your pharmacist first to see if it can be cut safely. Many patches are generics and can be a different type of patch than the original brand name. The brand name medicine might be a matrix patch, which could be cut safely. At the same time, one of its generic versions could deliver the same medicine as a reservoir patch, which should never be cut.

**8. Avoid high heat.**

Extra heat can increase the amount of medicine your body absorbs from a patch, causing an overdose. When wearing a patch, avoid putting a heating pad on over it or submerging it in a hot tub.

**9. Be careful when using tape to anchor a patch.**

Heavy, occlusive coverings can increase the potency of a patch, with tragic results. Avoid taping all the way around a patch with heavy tape or plastic wrap. If a patch is trying to peel off, try anchoring it with two strips of narrow tape in a cross-cross pattern.

**10. Don't apply patches in front of children.**

The boxes that patches come in are not child-resistant. To children, a medicine patch may look just like a sticker.

*Dr. Louise Achey, Doctor of Pharmacy, is a 42-year veteran of pharmacology and author of Why Dogs Can't Eat Chocolate: How Medicines Work and How YOU Can Take Them Safely. Get clear answers to your medication questions at her website and blog TheMedicationInsider.com. ©2021 Louise Achey*

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# Senior Focus

A Guide to Healthy Living For Seniors & Others



## Great ways to keep your mind sharp as you age

STATEPOINT - September, which is World Alzheimer's Month, is an excellent reminder to keep your mind and body healthy through the years. Experts say that doing so can reduce your risk for cognitive decline. Try taking on these new hobbies to keep your mind sharp as you age:

• **Cooking:** Not only can the development of a new complicated skill such as cooking improve cognitive functions like problem-solving and concentration, but having the ability to create your own nutritious meals at home has the added benefit of being good for brain health. From TikTok tutorials to online classes taught by master chefs, today, there are more avenues for picking up culinary know-how than ever before.

• **Music:** Learning to play a musical instrument has countless benefits for brain health, helping improve memory, hand-eye coordination and

more. It's also a mood booster, which is important, as depression is considered a risk factor for dementia. Check out instruments designed to build skills quickly. Whether you're a total novice or taking up the piano after a long hiatus, Casiotone Keyboards, for example, are portable, easy to use and connect to an app that features lessons and more.

• **Exercise:** The mind-body connection is strong. For ultimate brain health, stay physically active; and if you can do so outdoors, all the better. Research suggests that connecting with nature is good for one's mental well-being, reducing stress, anxiety and depression. Support your journey with tools that track your activity and inspire you to delve further into adventures, whether that be hiking, fishing or rock climbing. The watches in the Pro Trek line feature Quad Sensor technology to provide you with temperature

and barometric pressure so you can keep your eye on the weather conditions while out and about, as well as sunrise and sunset times, an app for anglers and much more.

• **Camaraderie:** Having an active social life can improve brain function. Unfortunately, if you aren't proactive about it, there are not always that many opportunities to make new friends in adulthood. Whether it's a sewing circle or a bowling league, consider joining a club or team for camaraderie and fun.

• **Fast fingers:** Did you know that you can use your calculator to keep your mind engaged when there's downtime or you're on-the-go? Calculator games can build math skills, improve memory and keep your mind nimble. Just as it is important to maintain physical fitness as you age, it's also critical to exercise your mind. Stay mentally active by trying new hobbies, building



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new skills and seeking out new experiences.

## Why now is the time to schedule that check-up or screening

STATEPOINT - If you haven't visited your physician since the start of the pandemic, medical experts say that the time is now to book check-ups and screenings for the entire family.

"The pandemic has had wide-scale negative health consequences beyond COVID-19. Many Americans have delayed important routine health services critical to keeping them healthy, including vital pediatric immunizations and preventive cancer screenings. Prevention is the best cure, so it's important to get your health back on track today," says Gerald E. Harmon, M.D., American Medical Association (AMA) president.

With school beginning and the cool weather

**SINCE THE PANDEMIC BEGAN...**

<p><b>Cancer screenings are still lagging:</b> <b>725K</b> The estimated combined total of missed breast, colon and cervical cancer screenings from March 2020 - March 2021</p>	<p><b>Preventive cancer screenings</b> can catch cancer early to keep people healthy.</p>	<p><b>+10,000</b> Projected excess deaths in 2021-2022 due to breast and colorectal cancers alone.</p>
<p>While mental health screenings via digital health tools are up, <b>routine care for mental health is down</b> as the impact on mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic has worsened.</p>	<p><b>52%</b> Adults with mental health conditions who delayed/forewent care since pandemic started.</p>	<p><b>14%</b> The drop in vaccine ordering data in 2020-21 compared to 2019.</p>
<p><b>41%</b> About 4 in 10 adults with one or more chronic health conditions reported delaying or forgoing health care since pandemic started.</p>	<p><b>Pediatric immunizations</b> decreased, putting our youngest and most vulnerable at risk of health complications. Well-child visits and recommended vaccinations are essential and help make sure children stay healthy and are protected from serious diseases.</p>	<p><b>20%</b> The drop in Measles vaccine ordering data 2020-21 compared to 2019.</p>
<p><b>1 in 3 adults</b> reporting delayed or forgone health care reported doing so worsened one or more of their health conditions or limited their abilities to work or perform other daily activities.</p>	<p>Adolescent and adult immunizations <b>sharply declined</b> during the pandemic.</p>	<p>An estimated <b>26M recommended vaccinations were missed</b> in 2020 compared to 2019.</p>

**CONTACT YOUR PHYSICIAN'S OFFICE TO SEE IF YOU ARE DUE FOR PREVENTIVE CARE OR SCREENINGS.**

Screenings, tests and preventive health measures are designed to keep you healthy and to help your doctor catch certain conditions before they become more serious.

months ahead, the AMA urges Americans to call their physician's office to learn if they are due for preventive care or screenings.

## Lost and found: tips for managing commonly misplaced items

STATEPOINT - In the haste to break free from your pandemic routine, you may find your new schedule overwhelming and hectic. And with that, comes the inconvenience of misplacing commonly used items. According to a survey conducted by Bluetooth tracking company Pixie, Americans spend an average of 2.5 days out of each calendar year searching for lost items.

The most common reason we keep misplacing our items is absentmindedness. Psychologists have a phrase for this, "If you don't encode, you can't retrieve." This means that if you go through your day without consciously thinking about where you're placing your keys, your brain has no information stored about the item's whereabouts. Other factors, such as stress levels and overall mental health, can also play a role in how often you misplace items.

Here are a few tips on how to prevent your precious possessions from going missing:

1. **Set digital reminders:** If you regularly lose track of specific items, digital reminders might be for you.



(c) monkeybusinessimages / iStock via Getty Images Plus

The most common reason we keep misplacing our items is absentmindedness.

There are a variety of great productivity apps available on most smartphones to remind you to double check your wallet before leaving the house. Most calendar apps such as Google Calendar and Outlook have remind features that can help you organize your valuables. There are also useful apps like To do list that specialize in creating reminders and daily lists.

2. **Retrace your steps:** "Retracing your steps" after losing an item can be a useful approach when activating your brain's context-dependent memory. With

context-dependent memory, your memory is the strongest when you mentally or physically place yourself back in the environment in which the item was lost. Reconstructing these events visually can help trigger your memories and be an important step in rediscovering a misplaced item.

3. **Try a Bluetooth tracker for smaller items:** For smaller items like your phone, wallet and keys, Bluetooth trackers can provide much-needed tech relief. Trackers like these are designed for those times you lose an item within

close proximity. Instead of wasting precious moments searching for your lost item, you can pull up an app to tell you where it is.

4. **Use the power of GPS tracking devices for high-value items:** When it comes to highly valuable items like photography equipment, luggage and even pets, you'll need more protection. Products like T-Mobile's SyncUP Tracker uses a combination of GPS technology and T-Mobile's reliable nationwide network to track an item at any moment from anywhere. Other devices that rely on Bluetooth technology often have tracking range limitations and shorter battery life. T-Mobile's SyncUP Tracker includes a rechargeable battery and virtual boundaries that alert you if an item leaves the designated location, all via your smartphone through an app available on both iOS and Android.

Just because you lost an item doesn't mean that you should lose hope or panic. With a few changes to your routine and even some tech upgrades, you'll find it much easier to cope during those forgetful moments.

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