

## Join Atrium Health Navicent in Recognizing National Stroke Month

*Take the Stroke Wellness Challenge between May 13 and May 22*

**MACON, Ga., May 13, 2024** – Atrium Health Navicent invites the community to participate in a 10-day Stroke Wellness Challenge in observance of National Stroke Month this May.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), someone in the United States has a stroke every 40 seconds. Every 3.5 minutes, someone dies of stroke. Every year in the U.S., about 795,000 people suffer a stroke, and about 610,000 of these are first-time strokes.

Central Georgians are at an increased risk for stroke due to the prevalence of common risk factors that include high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity and tobacco use. Georgia is in the “Stroke Belt,” an area in the Southeastern United States where stroke deaths are approximately 30 percent higher than the rest of the country. In 2021, Georgia held the 8th highest stroke death rate in the country, with 5,233 people dying from strokes.

The aim of National Stroke Month is to advocate for early stroke intervention by increasing awareness about the signs and symptoms that someone is having a stroke. By participating in Atrium Health Navicent’s 10-day Stroke Wellness Challenge between May 13 and May 22, individuals can learn more about how to prevent a stroke, recognize the signs of a stroke, and begin to live a healthier lifestyle:

**May 13:** Take time to learn the signs and symptoms of stroke and what to do if you suspect someone is having a stroke. Learn the acronym B.E.F.A.S.T. and call 911 immediately.

- B – Balance loss (Is the person suddenly having trouble with balance or coordination?)
- E – Eyesight changes (Is the person having sudden blurred or double vision in one or both eyes?)
- F – Facial weakness (Can the person smile? Has their mouth or eye drooped?)
- A – Arm or leg weakness (Can the person raise both arms?)
- S – Speech difficulty (Can the person speak clearly and understand what you say?)
- T – Time to act (Seek medical attention immediately!)

**May 14:** Focus on stretching, which can help reduce stress and tension, and have a positive effect on overall health. Stretching can also offer great benefits for stroke survivors such as preventing joint stiffness, muscle shortening, decreasing spastic movements and improving general function.

**May 15:** Swap your snack for a healthier alternative which can help reduce weight, a stroke risk factor. Try apples, carrots, nuts or seeds for crunchy cravings or more filling snacks like whole-grain toast with peanut or almond butter, cherry tomatoes with hummus or cheese that’s low in fat or fat-free.

**May 16:** Strengthen your core to improve balance. If you’re new to core strengthening, begin your workout slowly. Experts at [Atrium Health Navicent Wellness Center](#) can help you begin a program based on your individual needs. Benefits of physical activity for stroke recovery also may include improved mobility, walking and balance; improved mental function; reduced risk of stroke recurrence and a reduced risk of falls.

**May 17:** Take a few minutes to show gratitude and think about the positive things in your life. Positive thinking and being grateful has been shown to improve sleep, decrease depression, lower blood pressure, improve immune function and improve overall health.

**May 18:** Try a 10-minute home workout. Even 10 minutes of exercise can improve brain health, strengthen bones, lower blood pressure, lift your mood and improve your sleep. The [American Stroke Association](#) even offers exercises for stroke survivors that they can do sitting and laying down.

**May 19:** Stay hydrated. Keeping the body hydrated helps the heart to more easily pump blood through blood vessels to the muscles, and it helps muscles work efficiently. As a person grows older, he or she may become more prone to dehydration due to medications. Common symptoms of dehydration include: thirst, less-frequent urination, light-headedness and dizziness.

**May 20:** Reduce stress. Although everyone experiences stress, individuals need to work on controlling negative stress which can increase blood pressure and heart rate, elevate stress hormones and increase the risk for heart attack and stroke. Try one of the following stress-lowering activities today: Go for a walk, try a quick meditation, read a book or magazine, color or work on an art project, practice yoga, break down big problems into smaller parts, or engage in positive self-talk (instead of saying “I can’t do this,” say “I’ll do the best I can!”)

**May 21:** Add mini squats to your workout routine to strengthen your legs, build balance and reduce falls. Remember to start slowly and gradually work up the number of repetitions each day.

**May 22:** Take time to learn what you can do to reduce your risk of stroke by:

- Assessing your risk using The American Stroke Association’s [Stroke Risk Assessment](#)
- Eat a healthy diet
- Be physically active
- Watch your weight
- Live tobacco-free
- Manage your medical conditions
- Take medicine as prescribed by your doctor or other medical provider
- Be a team player to work with your health care team to make healthy changes part of your stroke prevention plan.

“We encourage everyone to participate in Atrium Health Navicent’s 10-day Stroke Wellness Challenge to learn more about stroke risk, how to recognize the signs and symptoms of a stroke, and to consider making simple lifestyle changes that can reduce stroke risk,” said Dr. Matthew Smith, Atrium Health Navicent’s stroke program director.

In addition to being recognized as a “high performing” stroke center by U.S. News & World Report, Atrium Health Navicent The Medical Center is a 13-time recipient of the “Get with the Guidelines – Stroke Gold Plus” Quality Achievement Award, an annual award presented by the American Heart Association (AHA) and American Stroke Association for excellence in stroke care. The health system earned the award by meeting specific quality achievement measures for the diagnosis and treatment of stroke patients at a set level for a designated period.

For the third consecutive year, Atrium Health Navicent has been named to AHA’s “Target Type 2 Diabetes” Honor Roll, which recognizes hospitals that are taking steps to help stroke patients control and manage Type 2 diabetes, a well-established risk factor for stroke.

To find a doctor, visit [www.NavicentHealth.org](http://www.NavicentHealth.org) and click “Find A Doctor.”

#### **About Atrium Health Navicent**

Atrium Health Navicent is the leading provider of health care in central and south Georgia and is committed to its mission of elevating health and well-being through compassionate care. Atrium Health Navicent is part of [Advocate Health](#), which is headquartered in Charlotte, North Carolina, and is the third-largest nonprofit health system in the United States, created from the combination of Atrium Health and Advocate Aurora Health. Atrium Health Navicent provides high-quality, personalized care in 53 specialties at more than 50 facilities throughout the region. As part of the largest, integrated, nonprofit health system in the Southeast, it is also able to tap into some of the nation’s leading medical experts and specialists with Atrium Health, allowing it to provide the best care close to home – including advanced innovations in virtual medicine and care. Throughout its 125-year history in the community, Atrium Health Navicent has remained dedicated to enhancing health and wellness for individuals throughout the region through nationally recognized quality care, community health initiatives and collaborative partnerships. It is also one of the leading teaching hospitals in the region, helping to ensure viability for rural health care for the next generation. For more information, please visit [www.NavicentHealth.org](http://www.NavicentHealth.org).

#### **About Advocate Health**

[Advocate Health](#) is the third-largest nonprofit integrated health system in the United States – created from the combination of Advocate Aurora Health and [Atrium Health](#). Providing care under the names [Advocate Health Care](#) in Illinois, Atrium Health in the Carolinas, Georgia and Alabama, and [Aurora Health Care](#) in Wisconsin, Advocate Health is a national leader in clinical innovation, health outcomes, consumer experience and value-based care, with [Wake Forest University School of Medicine](#) serving as the academic core of the enterprise. Headquartered in Charlotte, North Carolina, Advocate Health serves nearly 6 million patients and is engaged in hundreds of clinical trials and research studies. It is nationally recognized for its expertise in cardiology, neurosciences, oncology, pediatrics and rehabilitation, as well as organ transplants, burn treatments and specialized musculoskeletal programs. Advocate Health employs nearly 155,000 team members across 68 hospitals and over 1,000 care locations and offers one of the nation’s largest graduate medical education programs with over 2,000 residents and fellows across more than 200 programs. Committed to equitable care for all, Advocate Health provides nearly \$6 billion in annual community benefits.

###