

HEALTH ALERT!

Beliefs About Healthy Lifestyle Clash With Behavior

(NAPS)—You're never too young to reduce your risk of stroke—and you may need to start by changing your lifestyle.

According to a recent American Stroke Association survey:

- Nine out of 10 Americans between ages 18 and 24 believe they're living healthy lifestyles and want to live well into their late 90s. Yet most eat too much fast food, drink too many alcoholic and sugar-sweetened beverages and engage in other behaviors that could put them at risk for stroke.

- Most of those surveyed said they want to maintain quality health throughout their lives. Yet one-third don't believe engaging in healthy behaviors now could affect their risk for stroke in the future.

- Eight in 10 people between ages 25 and 44 years old also believe they're engaging in healthy lifestyles and hope to live to be 90 and beyond. While they're more likely to engage in healthy behaviors than 18- to 24-year-olds, they could also improve.

"This survey shows the dangerous disconnect that many young Americans have about how their behaviors affect their risks for stroke and other cardiovascular diseases," said Ralph Sacco, M.D., neurologist and president of the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association. "Starting healthy behaviors at a young age is critical to entering middle age in good shape."

People who make healthy lifestyle choices lower their risk of having a first stroke by as much



The investment you make in your health today will have a large payoff as you age.

as 80 percent compared with those who don't, according to the American Heart Association. Healthy behaviors include eating a low-fat diet high in fruits and vegetables, drinking alcohol and sugar-sweetened beverages only in moderation, exercising regularly, maintaining a healthy body weight and not smoking.

"Young adults need to make a connection between healthy behaviors and a healthy brain and heart," Sacco said. "People need to think in terms of striving for ideal health as well as surviving and thriving if a stroke occurs. An easier way to remember this is: Strive, Survive, Thrive."

To learn how to strive toward a healthy lifestyle to reduce the risk of stroke, visit My Life Check at www.mylifecheck.heart.org. To survive and thrive, learn the stroke symptoms and other helpful tips by visiting www.StrokeAssociation.org.