

Caregiver Tips for Working with a Stroke Survivor

1. Learn what part of the brain was injured by the stroke. For instance, a left hemisphere stroke causes paralysis or weakness on the right side of the body. A left sided stroke may also cause difficulties with speaking, reading and writing.
2. Stroke recovery can be a long, slow process. Don't give up! New therapies and treatments help survivors recover years after a stroke. Ask your doctor or therapist what services are available.
3. Check your home for hazards that may cause a fall. Some stroke survivors have vision loss in one eye. Clear a safe and wide path to the bathroom, bedroom and kitchen.
4. Stroke strips away personal control for survivors. Be patient and do not perform all household or personal chores because it is faster or easier for you. Survivors regain independence one task at a time. Each relearned task requires repetition. Celebrate the accomplishments of small tasks completed correctly.
5. Depression is not normal after stroke. It can occur at any time in stroke recovery. It should be evaluated as early as possible by a doctor or therapist. Treatment helps survivors maximize their recovery potential.
6. Fatigue is common and often overlooked in survivors. Even if a survivor does not have obvious physical difficulties, they may have difficulty with fatigue or chronic tiredness. Frequent rest periods, especially in the afternoon, can help survivors manage this problem.
7. To best communicate with a survivor, turn off radio or TV when holding conversations. Survivors often have difficulty "tuning out" other noises in the room after stroke. Noise can cause fatigue.

8. Group visits can be a challenge for a survivor. If the survivor has aphasia (a communication disorder caused by stroke), help them to follow conversations by writing key words on paper during the conversation and by speaking at a slower pace. Try using simpler words if the survivor seems to have trouble with comprehension. Intelligence has not been affected by stroke, just the ability to process information as quickly as before the stroke. Therapy and practice can help survivors regain their use of language.
9. Encourage social activities. Survivors and their families may avoid outings because of the time and effort involved. Accept offers of help with transportation, and find support groups or stroke survivor social groups to help the caregiver and stroke survivor remain social. Learn from others living with stroke.
10. Practice, practice, practice! Whether it is using a weak arm, leg or difficulties with speech - improvement comes with practice. Avoid mindless activities such as watching TV. Try exercise, large piece puzzles, word games, card games, or community programs for survivors. Celebrate improvements everyday!



**For more information, please contact the
Minnesota Stroke Association**
Phone: 763-553-0088
Fax: 763-553-1058
Website: www.strokmn.org



www.health.state.mn.us/cvh
Phone: 651-201-5412
Fax: 651-201-5800