

Your Care Instructions

You had a stroke. This means that the blood flow to a part of your brain was blocked for some time, which damages the nerve cells in that part of the brain. The part of your body controlled by that part of your brain may not function properly now.

The brain is an amazing organ that can heal itself to some degree. The stroke you had damaged part of your brain, but other parts of your brain may take over in some way for the damaged areas. You have already started this process.

Your doctor will talk with you about what you can do to prevent another stroke. High blood pressure, high cholesterol, and diabetes are all risk factors for stroke. If you have any of these conditions, work with your doctor to make sure they are under control. Other risk factors for stroke include being overweight, smoking, and not getting regular exercise.

Going home may be hard for you and your family. The more you can try to do for yourself, the better. Remember to take each day one at a time.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor or nurse call line if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- Enter a stroke rehabilitation (rehab) program, if your doctor recommends it. Physical, speech, and occupational therapies can help you manage bathing, dressing, eating, and other basics of daily living.
- Do not drive until your doctor says it is okay.
- It is normal to feel sad or depressed after a stroke. If these feelings last, talk to your doctor.
- If you are having problems with urine leakage, go to the washroom at regular times, including when you first wake up and at bedtime. Also, limit fluids after dinner.
- If you are constipated, drink plenty of fluids, enough so that your urine is light yellow or clear like water. If you have kidney, heart, or liver disease and have to limit fluids, talk with your doctor before you increase the amount of fluids you drink. Set up a regular time for using the toilet. If you continue to have constipation, your doctor may suggest using a bulking agent, such as Metamucil, or a stool softener, laxative, or enema.

Medicines

- Take your medicines exactly as prescribed. Call your doctor or nurse call line if you think you are having a problem with your medicine. You may be taking several medicines. ACE (angiotensin-converting enzyme) inhibitors, angiotensin II receptor blockers (ARBs), beta-blockers, diuretics (water pills), and calcium channel blockers control your blood pressure. Statins help lower cholesterol. Your doctor may also prescribe medicines for depression, pain, sleep problems, anxiety, or agitation.
- If your doctor has given you a blood thinner to prevent another stroke, be sure you get instructions about how to take your medicine safely. Blood thinners can cause serious bleeding problems.
- Do not take any over-the-counter medicines or herbal products without talking to your doctor first.
- If you take birth control pills or hormone therapy, talk to your doctor about whether they are right for you.

For family members and caregivers

- Make the home safe. Set up a room so that your loved one does not have to climb stairs. Be sure the washroom is on the same floor. Move throw rugs and furniture that could cause falls. Make sure that the lighting is good. Put grab bars and seats in tubs and showers.
- Find out what your loved one can do and what they need help with. Try not to do things for your loved one that they can do on his or her own. Help them learn and practice new skills.
- Visit and talk with your loved one often. Try doing activities together that you both enjoy, such as playing cards or board games. Keep in touch with your loved one's friends as much as you can and encourage them to visit.
- Take care of yourself. Do not try to do everything yourself and ask other family members to help. Eat well, get enough rest, and take time to do things that you enjoy. Keep up with your own doctor visits, and make sure to take your medicines regularly. Get out of the house as much as you can. Join a local support group. Find out if you qualify for home health care visits to help with rehab or for adult daycare.

When should you call for help?

Call 911 anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- You have signs of another stroke. These may include:
 - Sudden numbness, tingling, weakness, or loss of movement in your face, arm, or leg, especially on only one side of your body.
 - Sudden vision changes.

- Sudden trouble speaking.
- Sudden confusion or trouble understanding simple statements.
- Sudden problems with walking or balance.
- A sudden, severe headache that is different from past headaches.

Call 911 even if these symptoms go away in a few minutes.

Call your doctor or nurse call line now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have new symptoms that may be related to your stroke, such as falls or trouble swallowing.

Watch closely for changes in your health and be sure to contact your doctor or nurse call line if you have any problems.

For 24/7 nurse advice and general health information call Health Link at 811.

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