



# Let's Talk About Stroke and Rehabilitation

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## What is stroke rehabilitation?

When the immediate crisis of a stroke has passed and you've been stabilized medically, it's time to consider rehabilitation therapy. The effects of stroke may mean that you must change or relearn how you live day to day. Rehabilitation may reverse some of these effects.

The goals of rehabilitation are to increase independence, improve physical functioning, help you gain a satisfying quality of life after stroke, and help you prevent another stroke.



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## Who will be a part of my rehabilitation program?

Your rehabilitation team may include:

- **Physiatrist** — A medical doctor who specializes in rehabilitation.
- **Physical Therapist** — A healthcare provider who specializes in maximizing a stroke survivor's mobility and independence to improve major motor and sensory impairments, such as walking, balance and coordination.
- **Occupational Therapist** — A therapist who focuses on helping stroke survivors rebuild skills in daily living activities such as bathing, toileting and dressing.
- **Rehabilitation Nurse** — A nurse who coordinates the medical support needs of stroke survivors throughout rehabilitation.
- **Speech Therapist** — A specialist who helps to restore language skills and also treats swallowing disorders.
- **Recreational Therapist** — A therapist who helps to modify activities that the survivor enjoyed before the stroke or introduces new ones.
- **Psychiatrist or Psychologist** — Specialists who help stroke survivors adjust to the emotional challenges and new circumstances of their lives.
- **Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor** — A specialist who evaluates work-related abilities of people with disabilities. They can help stroke survivors make the most of their skills to return to work.

## What will I do in rehabilitation?

Improve your independence by including:

- **Activities of daily living** such as eating, bathing and dressing.
- **Mobility skills** such as transferring, walking or self-propelling a wheelchair.
- **Communication skills** in speech and language.
- **Cognitive skills** such as memory or problem solving.
- **Socialization skills** in interacting with other people.
- **Psychological functioning** to improve coping skills and treatment to overcome depression if needed.

## How can I learn more?

- Talk to your doctor, nurse or other healthcare professionals. Ask about other stroke topics. This is one of many *Let's Talk About Stroke* fact sheets available.
- For more information on stroke, or to receive additional fact sheets, call the American Stroke Association at 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653) or visit us online at [StrokeAssociation.org](http://StrokeAssociation.org).
- If you or someone you know has had a stroke, call the American Stroke Association's "Warmline" at 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653), and:
  - ✓ Speak with other stroke survivors and caregivers, trained to answer your questions and offer support
  - ✓ Get information on stroke support groups in your area
  - ✓ Sign up to get *Stroke Connection Magazine*, a free publication for stroke survivors and caregivers

## What are the Warning Signs of Stroke?

-  **Sudden weakness or numbness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body**
-  **Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding**
-  **Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes**
-  **Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination**
-  **Sudden, severe headaches with no known cause**



Learn to recognize a stroke.  
*Because time lost is brain lost.*

Today there are treatments that can reduce the risk of damage from the most common type of stroke, but only if you get help quickly – within 3 hours of your first symptoms.

Call 9-1-1 immediately if you experience these warning signs!

## Do you have questions for your doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write your own questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider:

What are your recommendations for my rehabilitation?

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Can you refer me to a psychiatrist?

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How can I continue to improve my skills after formal rehabilitation ends?

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*The statistics in this kit were up to date at publication. For the latest statistics, see the Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics Update at [americanheart.org/statistics](http://americanheart.org/statistics).*

*The American Stroke Association is a division of the American Heart Association. Your contributions will support research and educational programs that help reduce disability and death from stroke.*

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