



American Heart Association® | American Stroke Association®

*Learn and Live®*

# Let's Talk About Stroke and Rehabilitation

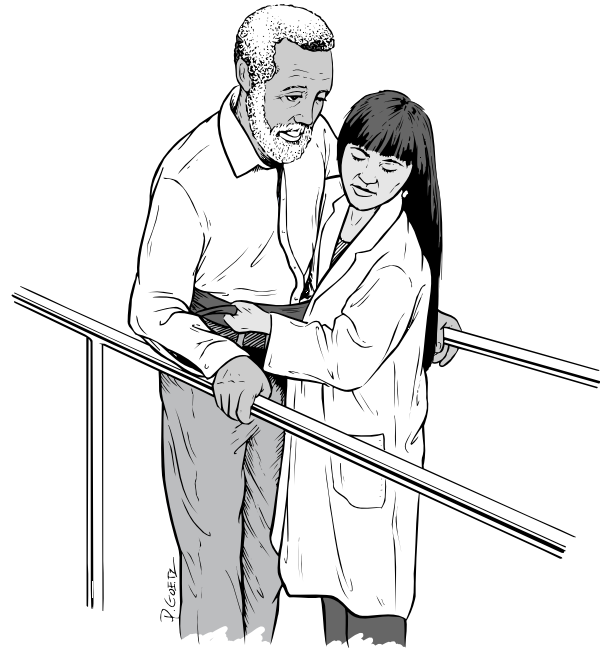
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## What is stroke rehabilitation?

When the immediate crisis of a stroke has passed and you've been stabilized medically, it's time to consider rehabilitation therapy.

After a stroke, you may have to change or relearn how you live day to day. Rehabilitation may reverse some of the effects of stroke.

*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 part of my rehabilitation program?

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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?

Rehabilitation programs often focus on:

- 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.
- Social 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.
- For more information about stroke, or to get more fact sheets, call the American Stroke Association at 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653) or visit us online at 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*, a free magazine 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 may reduce the risk of damage from the most common type of stroke, but only if you get help quickly — within three 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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