



# STROKE

INFORMATION FOR FAMILY, WHĀNAU AND FRIENDS





**Stroke is a sudden and serious condition and it comes as a shock. It's upsetting to see someone in this state especially as you may not understand what has happened to them and not know how to support them.**

**This pamphlet has a few ideas which may be useful to you now.**

**It's worthwhile to keep a track of information you receive as it may be handy in the future.**

**Some people write down things they want to know and others keep a diary of what's happening.**

**You may find it useful to nominate one contact person to keep your family and friends informed about how things are going.**



**Be patient.** Stroke damages the brain which can make it difficult to relearn even simple tasks.

**Be positive and offer hope.**

Recovering from stroke is a slow process so your praise is needed for every sign of progress.

## IMPACT OF STROKE

Stroke can have many different effects. These include problems with mobility, swallowing, bladder and bowel function, vision, communication, tiredness, memory and concentration. It can also affect emotions and can cause depression, anxiety or personality changes.

These effects can have a big impact on everyone. You will receive support, information, care and advice from the medical, nursing and rehabilitation teams and other specialist services in hospital and then community services at home.

## RECOVERY



**Recovery from stroke is difficult to predict.**

**The amount of recovery someone will make and the amount of time it takes varies – from several weeks or months, and it can continue for years.**

The Stroke Foundation **Life after Stroke** guide has more detailed information about aspects of managing life after stroke. This is available free of charge. Please ask hospital staff or the Stroke Foundation for this.



## IDEAS TO HELP YOU IN HOSPITAL

**Start by talking with the medical team and nurses. Ask them to explain what has happened and clarify anything you don't understand.**

As you know the person with the stroke well, you will be most aware of their changes and improvements. It may help to keep track of day to day changes you notice.

Ask the medical and nursing team whether there are ways you can assist with care.

When rehabilitation – physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech and language therapy - starts ask the therapists how you can help.

**Focus on one day at a time.  
Recovering from stroke is a gradual process. Provide encouragement, motivation and hope.**

Remember to look after yourself. Take breaks, get some exercise and plenty of sleep and plan regular healthy meals.



## GOING HOME FROM HOSPITAL

Some people need a small amount of care at home, but others have more complex needs. The medical team, rehabilitation and social services will work with you to develop a plan for home.

Make sure you are actively involved in the planning and that your voice is heard at family meetings.

New medicines can be confusing - it's good to understand what they are; when they need to be taken and how they are taken. Your local pharmacy can help too when you are at home.

Social workers will link you with support services and advise about financial help that may be available.



Make sure the social worker or hospital staff tell you about NASC – **Needs Assessment and Service Coordination** support; what services are available, when they will start; and the name of your NASC contact person.

**Have a clear plan of support before you leave the hospital so you know who will be coming to your home and when they will be visiting.**

Know who you can contact if the plan doesn't work well.

Let the GP and practice nurse know when discharge from hospital is planned.

Some people may move to a rehabilitation unit before coming home and others may be assessed for alternative care if this is appropriate.



## **IDEAS TO HELP YOU AT HOME**

**It is common for someone who has had a stroke to feel quite low on returning home and to need a lot of encouragement.**

Everything will take much longer. It is realistic, not selfish, to think carefully about taking care of yourself. Try to organise the day so you have at least a little time to yourself.

Ask family members and friends for help with specific tasks, if you need it.

**Keep up your friendships and social contacts; email, Skype and phoning are good ways to keep in touch if you can't get out and about so much.**

You may want to join a support group to meet other people in the same position as you – the Stroke Foundation can advise you about this.

Ask the professionals who have helped you for guidance and be sure the local **Stroke Foundation community stroke advisor** makes contact and visits once you are home.

Try not to be overprotective – it helps to have the right balance between helping and developing independence.

Gather and use as much information as you need to help you understand more about stroke and how you can manage at home.

**Learn the signs of a stroke.**



**If you see any one of these signs call 111 immediately.** Getting help fast can reduce damage to the brain and give someone a better chance of recovery.

## **INFORMATION, ADVICE AND SUPPORT**

### **Stroke Foundation of New Zealand**

0800 78 76 53 Free phone for advice and link with community stroke advisors

[www.stroke.org.nz](http://www.stroke.org.nz)

### **Healthline**

24 hour telephone advice

0800 61 11 16

### **Guide for Carers**

0800 77 77 97

[www.msd.govt.nz/what-we-can-do/community/carers/index.html](http://www.msd.govt.nz/what-we-can-do/community/carers/index.html)

### **Carers New Zealand**

0800 77 77 97

[www.carers.net.nz](http://www.carers.net.nz)

### **Health and Disability Commissioner**

0800 11 22 33

[www.hdc.org.nz/](http://www.hdc.org.nz/)

### **Code of Consumer Rights**

[www.hdc.org.nz/complaints](http://www.hdc.org.nz/complaints)

### **Health Passport**

Ask at the hospital or ring 0800 11 22 33

[www.hdc.org.nz/publications/resources-to-order](http://www.hdc.org.nz/publications/resources-to-order)

### **NASC**

0800 37 36 64

[www.tinyurl.com/766fc93](http://www.tinyurl.com/766fc93)

## **IF YOU HAVE ACCESS TO THE INTERNET**

### **Stroke Association UK**

[www.stroke.org.uk](http://www.stroke.org.uk)

### **National Stroke Foundation Australia**

[www.strokefoundation.com.au](http://www.strokefoundation.com.au)

### **American Stroke Association USA**

[www.strokeassociation.org](http://www.strokeassociation.org)