

# Life Back After a Stroke

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It all happened so quickly, one minute you were fine and the next you find out that you have had a stroke. Having a stroke can be devastating for many people. You stop and think, I have been taking such good care of myself, why did this happen to me? But truly a stroke can happen to anyone. The best way to prevent yourself from having a stroke is to try and control the risk factors as best you can.

The symptoms of a stroke are unexplained weakness in your arms or legs, inability to feel one side of your face or body, slurred speech, difficulty seeing, headache, etc. If you or a loved one has any of these symptoms, it is important you treat it as it could be a stroke and take the appropriate actions.

After many people have had a stroke they feel that their quality of life will never be the same. They feel as if they are going to miss out on things that they enjoy or that are of great importance to them. But there are many ways that people can live a normal and happy life after experiencing a stroke.

One of the most important things to remember after a stroke is to never give up, always believe that you can accomplish anything and you will. It is hard work and dedication that has helped stroke patients to obtain a quality of life they feel is important.

## **Memory loss**

A stroke survivor may experience a certain amount of memory loss that can vary from being so subtle that even close family members wouldn't notice to a severe case in which they have trouble remembering who their family is. It is important that families or caregivers remain positive and try to help out as much as they can. The use of calendars, notes, day planners, or simple reminders is easy and useful and unnoticeable ways to help trigger your memory for things that are now easy for you to forget. For stroke survivors that have a significant amount of memory loss and even have trouble finishing their own sentences, it is important as caregivers and family members to try and let them finish their own sentences first, as to not make them feel bad, but don't let them struggle too much before helping them finish what they want to say. When stroke survivors experience memory loss they are easily frustrated, it is important to remember to take your time and complete activities slowly and this will help to keep your mind up to speed with your body. Often after a stroke your mind can't work as fast at telling your body what to do, so you need to be patient and if you try to do things slowly then your mind can keep up.

## **Loss of function**

Some stroke survivors may neglect the side of their body that corresponds to the side of the brain in which the stroke happened; this can mean loss of function or

sensation in a limb. This can be very devastating for a person to deal with. Some people with severe neglect will not even use one side of their body at all, including looking to that side or even hearing things from that side. Then there are some people who just have the loss of using their hand or leg, but don't actually neglect the entire side of the body. It is important after a stroke to incorporate your involved limb as much as possible, for example if you are unable to move your arm it can still be used to stabilize things (when your writing, reading a paper/book, etc) and try to incorporate that limb as much as possible, so if you have loss of function in your left arm try to hold the left arm with your right arm and have it help you pick up things around the house. It is so important to try to continue to use the involved limb as much as possible, even if this means helping that limb along with the uninvolved limb. It is also extremely important to have an exercise program in place to ensure that the affected limb doesn't get tight and rigid. Even basic exercises such as, stretching your left hand with your right hand a couple times a day will help to eliminate tightness and tone.

After having a stroke you can become very frustrated and feel as if your life is over, but that is not the case. There are ways to help improve your lifestyle and ensure that you are functioning at a level that you would like to be. The more that you try to get your life back, the better chance you will have of truly getting parts of it back. The most important thing is to stay positive and always try and as caregivers and family members it is important to be upbeat, positive, and help as much as you can.