



**American  
Stroke  
Association.**  
A division of the  
American Heart Association.

# Key Patient Messages

## The 2026 Stroke Rehabilitation and Recovery Guideline

**1. Depression and anxiety are very [common conditions](#) that can develop after a stroke.**

Ask your clinical care team to assess you in the hospital and during your recovery, as these conditions can arise at any time. It's important to know that effective treatments are available, and caring for your mental health is just as important as your physical recovery.

**2. Emotional support can also help you navigate the many life changes following a stroke.**

Support is available both in person and online. Support for caregivers is equally important in helping both the stroke survivor and caregiver in the recovery process. Here are some resources that may help you find support and connect with other stroke survivors and caregivers who are experiencing similar situations:

[Stroke Support Group Finder | American Stroke Association](#)

[House Calls: Stroke Meetups](#)

[Caregiving Resource](#)

**3. Younger stroke survivors and caregivers have unique needs that are not often talked about.**

This can include returning to [the workforce](#) or parenting young children. Finding support and connecting with other stroke survivors facing similar situations can help.

**4. There are health issues that stroke survivors may be hesitant to discuss, such as trouble holding in urine (urinary incontinence) and changes in sexual function.**

It's important to know that these are common issues that may occur after a stroke, and the clinical care team can help you find effective treatment.

**5. Stroke survivors also have a higher chance of experiencing [sleep](#) apnea.**

After a stroke, many people experience brain fog and fatigue; however, sleep apnea may also contribute to these symptoms. Ask your clinical care team to check if you have sleep apnea. If you do, they can help you find the best way to improve your sleep.

**6. Stroke survivors often experience pain.**

If you have pain talk with your healthcare professional about ways to alleviate pain. Pain may inhibit your rehabilitation progress.

**7. Every stroke is unique and each survivor faces a different set of challenges.**

Recovery doesn't look the same for everyone, and care should be personalized to fit each person's needs.

**8. Because recovery is different for everyone, where you receive care after leaving the hospital will depend on how severe your stroke was.**

Some people may go home shortly after a stroke, while others could need additional care in a [skilled nursing facility, inpatient rehabilitation facility, or long-term care hospital](#). There are also many different clinicians involved in your stroke recovery. Learn more about the [care team](#) here.

**9. Recreation and leisure activities are a critical part of a healthy life and should be part of [stroke recovery](#).**

By sharing with your clinical care team the types of activities you enjoy, they can help create a personalized recovery plan that includes activities that are most meaningful to you. Therapy should incorporate activities, such as sports, games, art, music, and social outings. Sometimes a recreational therapist may be part of your care team, leading such activities.

**10. During [rehabilitation](#) after stroke, you will have many kinds of therapies with many different health care providers.**

These therapies will be activities that help you recover skills, adjust how you typically do things, or adjust your environment, which might include:

- Practice using your more affected arm and hand in various activities to recover motor skills
- Practice talking with the therapist to recover speech/language skills.
- Using a checklist so you don't forget important steps of an activity and their order
- Using a reacher or grabber tool to allow you to pick up dropped objects without losing your balance
- Walking with a cane
- Rearranging your kitchen or other spaces in your home, or workplace, so the most used items are on easy-to-reach shelves and other accessible places.

**11. Remember that if you have had a stroke, you are at increased risk of having another stroke.**

Talk with your clinical care team about what can help [prevent a second \(secondary prevention\) stroke](#) from happening.

**12. Stroke recovery occurs over months to years and does not end when you leave a structured program.**

Recovery is ongoing and doesn't have to include a structured therapy program. This could involve participating in activities at a local fitness center that are specifically designed for stroke survivors. Keeping your muscles strong is important in stroke recovery. Keep your body moving!