

Spasticity and Stroke

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Everything you need to know about spasticity and stroke

Spasticity is the second most frequently occurring condition that stroke survivors face, according to the [National Stroke Association](#). This condition is also found in individuals with cerebral palsy, traumatic brain injury, multiple sclerosis, and spinal cord injury. Spasticity occurs when the central nervous system (i.e. brain and spinal cord) can't communicate properly with your muscles.

Symptoms of Spasticity

Spasticity can impair coordination, muscle movement, and can create painful spasms in your arms and legs. Other symptoms include:

- Overactive reflexes
- Involuntary movements like spasms
- Pain, ranging from mild to serious
- Delayed motor development
- Contractures (permanent contraction of the muscle and tendon due to severe persistent stiffness and spasms)
- Bone and joint deformities

Treatment Options

Your doctor might prescribe you with medications for spasticity, and your physical or occupational therapist might start you with muscle stretches. These treatments are often used in conjunction with each other to ease symptoms and help increase your range of motion. Also, your therapist might recommend assistive equipment like braces to prevent tendon shortening.

Botox Isn't Just For Beauty

What is commonly known as a beauty injection is also a treatment option for upper limb spasticity. Local injections of botulinum toxin (Botox) help decrease muscle stiffness in the elbow, wrist, finger, and thumb muscles. This treatment option has been shown to be more effective than oral medicines for many kinds of spasticity, according to [WebMD](#). We hope the Botox stigma won't stop you from discussing this option with your doctor.

Living with Spasticity

Your occupational therapist might recommend assistive equipment for your home to improve safety during spasticity treatment. Some examples of at-home assistive equipment are ramps, grab bars, shower/tub benches, and adhesive strips for the bottom of your bathtub. These will help prevent falling in dangerous places like showers or stairs should a spasm occur.

Be A Goal-Getter

Unfortunately, one of the most frustrating parts of living with a physical impairment is the inability to enjoy the activities you once did. Don't let these setbacks get to you. Instead, create a wish list of everything you want to be able to do. This will help you form goals while staying motivated and optimistic. You can also take your list with you when you see your doctor or therapist and talk with them about how you can achieve these goals.

You are so strong! And your strength and determination will help you get through your spasticity one day at a time.