

# The Ultimate Guide to Post Stroke Side Effects – Part 2

March 3, 2017



In [part 1 of this article](#), we discussed 9 post stroke side effects that affect how your body moves.

Now, in part 2, we're going to discuss stroke side effects that affect:

- How your body functions
- How your body feels
- How your emotions feel

Again, it's a pretty lengthy topic. So, if your coffee has gotten cold, grab a fresh cup and let's continue.

## Part 2: How Your Body Functions

# 1. Problems with Speech

When stroke affects your ability to speak, then you could be suffering from a condition called [aphasia](#), which occurs when the language center of your brain is affected by stroke.

## Treatment:

Some survivors experience *spontaneous recovery* from aphasia, which means that the condition fixes itself over time.

Other survivors need to participate in *speech therapy* to help regain their ability to speak. When speech therapy doesn't help, you can also try [singing therapy](#).

**This is very effective because even though a survivor may not be able to speak their words, they might still be able to *sing* their words.**

This occurs because language is a left-brain function and singing is a right-brain function. So even though the left-brain language function is damaged, stroke survivors can still access their right-brain singing function!

# 2. Impaired Vision or Spatial Attention

If you find yourself completely neglecting things and people on the affected side of your body, then you may suffer from [one-sided neglect or field cuts](#).

One-sided neglect is an attention issue, which means that you cannot pay attention to your affected side.

Field cuts are a visual issue, which means that you cannot see on your affected side.

## Treatment:

To treat one-sided neglect, try to have people approach you on your affected side. This will help train you to bring attention into your affected side.

Also, try to create a habit of turning to your affected side to practice paying attention there.

The more attention you bring into your affected side consistently, the more you will stimulate that part of your brain and start to heal.

To treat field cuts, you may need to participate in visual therapy to retrain your brain how to see properly again. [Eye exercises](#) and vision training can be very beneficial for treating impaired vision.

### 3. Problems Controlling Your Bladder or Bowels

Stroke can affect your ability to control your bladder and/or bowel movements, which is a condition known as incontinence.

#### Treatment:

Treatment for incontinence involves a practice called 'urgency control.' The next time you feel like you have to pee, do something mentally to take your mind off the urgency to relieve yourself.

For example, count to 100, try to say the alphabet backwards, or take deep breaths to take your mind off your urgency and practice urgency control. The more you practice control, the better you will get at controlling your movements.

And in the meantime, you can use these [tips for coping with incontinence](#).

### 4. Seizures

[Seizures](#) occur when there is sudden disorganized electrical activity in the brain, and they can be a very scary experience. Once that about 5% of stroke survivors will experience.

#### How to handle a seizure:

It's extremely important to remember *not* to hold down someone who is having a seizure and *not* to put anything in their mouth.

Instead, roll them onto their side (if they are on the floor), stay with them until the seizure is over, and pay attention to how long the seizure lasts.

If the seizure lasts for longer than 5 minutes, call 9-1-1 immediately.

#### Treatment:

Seizures are typically controlled with anti-seizure medication.

In severe cases, there is a device called a *vagus nerve stimulator* that is surgically attached to your neck to stimulate the nerve with electrical impulses. This stimulation helps prevent future seizures.

## Part 3: How Your Body Feels

### 1. Odd, Mixed Up Sensations

You may have *sensory issues* after stroke if you've experienced any of the following symptoms:

- Inability to feel hot/cold
- Feeling hot/cold at inappropriate times
- Tingling or numbing sensations
- Inability to taste
- Dramatic change in taste
- Pins-and-needles sensation

All of these issues are caused by sensory loss.

### Treatment:

If you suffer from sensory loss, then you should participate in [sensory re-education](#).

During sensory re-education, you will participate in exercises such as touching different temperature or textured objects, identifying different temperatures, feeling electrical stimulation, feeling pressure, and many other exercises that engage your senses.

The goal of sensory re-education is to retrain sensory pathways in your brain. All sensory re-education exercises should be repeated at least a few times in order to maximize neuroplasticity and healing in the brain.

## 2. Post Stroke Pain

[Post stroke pain](#) is an unfortunate side effect of stroke – one that many stroke survivors deal with. Of all the stroke side effects, post stroke pain can be the most disruptive to your life.

To treat post stroke pain, it's important to narrow down what type of pain you're experiencing, and then treat that type specifically.

**Central post stroke pain** is often described as a pin-and-needles sensation accompanied by intense pain. This is a problem with *sensation*, and [some studies](#) have shown that sensory re-education can help with this type of pain.

Pain in your muscles can also be caused by spasticity, which is best treated with rehab exercises. Sometimes it works best to participate in other treatments too, like Botox, to provide relief while you work on your rehab exercises.

## 3. Headaches

Headaches are a common and worrisome stroke side effect. Mild headaches are sometimes considered common and should go away with the passage of time.

But if you experience severe headaches or mild headaches that last for longer than a few hours, seek medical attention *immediately* because it could be a sign of something going horribly wrong.

#### Treatment:

If you experience a headache, try drinking lots of water. Sometimes headaches are caused by dehydration since your brain is made of 75% water. Your brain is also trying to heal itself, so your body may need more water now than it did before.

If you are hydrated and still experience headaches, or mild headaches that last for longer than a few hours, then seek medical attention immediately!

## 4. Tiredness, Sleepiness, and Fatigue

Ah yes, this is one of the most common stroke side effects that can often catch you off guard. Because even if you didn't need much sleep before stroke, you're probably going to [need A LOT of sleep after stroke](#).

Because your brain is rapidly trying to heal itself, and it needs lots of rest and relaxation in order to keep healing.

#### Treatment:

When your body wants sleep, let yourself sleep. If your environment is getting in the way, let friends and family know how important sleep is for your health right now. Hopefully they will accommodate your need for quality sleep.

If you're experiencing trouble with sleeping, then talk to your doctor. They may recommend some medication to help you get the sleep your brain so desperately needs.

Not into medication? Try some deep breathing or relaxation techniques before bed to help promote sleepiness.

## Part 4: How Your Emotions Feel

### 1. Depression and Anxiety

Unfortunately, depression and anxiety are common stroke side effects that many survivors experience and overcome. There are many [causes of depression](#) – from changes to the brain to changes in lifestyle – so there are also many treatment options.

### Treatment:

First off, try joining a support group if you can. If there aren't any local support groups in your area, join our [online stroke support group on Facebook](#).

Second, try to avoid isolation as much as possible, especially if isolation is coming from a place of [shame](#). There are many people around you who are very willing to reach out and support you if you let them know that help is needed.

Lastly, our stroke recovery book [Healing & Happiness After Stroke](#) is an excellent tool for boosting self-esteem and happiness during recovery. It was written specifically for stroke survivors dealing with depression.

## 2. Identity Issues

Many stroke survivors feel like they're a different person after stroke. In fact, we've heard some survivors refer to themselves as 'after-stroke-me' and 'before-stroke-me.'

If you can relate to this, then you may be experiencing identity issues or [personality changes after stroke](#).

### Treatment:

If your personality has changed in a way that you don't like and you want to get back to your old self, then plenty of self-reflection and [meditation](#) can help. Identity issues are also addressed in [Healing & Happiness After Stroke](#).

Remember to exercise as much self-compassion as you can during this time. Treat yourself the way you would treat someone else in your exact same shoes: with love, patience, and compassion.

## 3. Uncontrollable Laughing and/or Crying

If you have experienced random bouts of laughter and/or crying, you may suffer from a condition known as [emotional lability](#) (also known as pseudobulbar effect).

Emotional lability can interfere with a stroke survivor's life when outbursts of emotion are not fitting for the environment, like laughing at a funeral or busting into tears while picking a child up from school.

## Treatment:

Emotional lability is most commonly treated with medication.

Other survivors have reported that the condition goes away on its own (i.e. spontaneous recovery) and that accepting the situation instead of resisting it helps, too.

We understand that emotional lability can be very tough to live with, so try to be as compassionate with yourself as you can.

Aaaand that wraps up our overview of stroke side effects. It was a pretty long list, so we hope that it gave you an idea of which stroke side effects to start looking into deeper.