

# 16 Things to Do After Discharge from the Hospital after Stroke

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After discharge from the hospital after stroke, there are many new factors to consider for your health, safety, and recovery.

To help you stay on top of everything, we created this ultimate guide on what to do after discharge from the hospital. It's quite a long read, and that's because there's a lot to consider.

We will start with topics to consider if you're still in the hospital, and then move on to other topics once you're home.

## 1. Ask your team where you should be discharged

Some stroke survivors are able to go straight home after stroke. However, depending upon the severity of your stroke, you may need to spend some time at a facility to improve your stroke deficits until you are ready to go home. These facilities can include:

**Long-term acute care facility:** Here, you can spend a few weeks or months receiving intensive daily therapy and medical support to help boost movement recovery and the activities of daily living.

**Skilled nursing facility:** This facility is great if you have slightly less intense medical needs than those who need long-term acute care, but you also need extra assistance before going home.

**Home healthcare:** Once you are able to go home after stroke, you can consider bringing therapists into your home. This is especially helpful if you cannot drive yet.

Be sure to include your **physiatrist** in your conversation as you decide what the best location for you after discharge.

## 2. Know the warning signs to come back to the hospital

If you didn't ask before you left the hospital, be sure to ask your doctor or therapist what warning signs indicate that you need to return to the hospital. Understanding the warning signs is an extremely important step to ensure your health and safety.

Caregivers and family members: You know about the F.A.S.T. way to identify a stroke, right?

## 3. Know your stroke risk factors and manage them appropriately

Unfortunately, every stroke survivor is at a higher risk of recurrent stroke. Therefore, stroke risk management is absolutely essential. Some stroke risk factors are uncontrollable, like heredity or age. Luckily, many **stroke risk factors** are manageable; meaning, you can take active steps to minimize your risk.

For example, high blood pressure and atherosclerosis – two dangerous stroke risk factors – can both be improved through a **healthy diet**.

[Read this article](#) to learn about other stroke risk factors and how to manage them.

## 4. Prepare for the physical side-effects (especially these two)

There are many physical post-stroke side effects that make recovery a challenge after stroke. For starters, learning about *one-sided neglect* and *learned nonuse* can help ensure that you maximize your recovery while minimizing negative side effects.

**One-sided neglect** occurs when damage on one side of the brain causes you to completely ignore the affected side of your body. This includes objects and people near that side of the body, too. In order to treat and prevent one-sided neglect, have family and caregivers approach you from your affected side. This will help train your brain to attend to your affected side.

**Learned nonuse** occurs when you completely neglect your affected limbs. And if you ignore them for too long, your brain can completely forget how to use them! To prevent learned nonuse from happening, be sure to move your affected limbs each day – even if it's just a little!

## 5. Prepare for verbal side effects

When stroke affects the language center of the brain, it can affect your ability to speak. This condition is known as aphasia, which a speech therapist can help treat. If speech therapy isn't

working, then you can also try **singing therapy**. Surprisingly, although a stroke survivor cannot say their words, they can actually sing their words.

Talking is controlled by the language center in the left hemisphere of the brain, and music and creativity is controlled by the right hemisphere. Since stroke typically only affects one side of the brain, stroke survivors with aphasia can typically find a way to communicate through their singing right brain.

## 6. Work on restoring mobility as soon as possible

In the first few weeks and months after stroke, the brain is in a 'heightened state of plasticity.' Meaning, the brain is rapidly trying to heal itself and you will most likely see rapid motor improvement during this window of time.

Try to take advantage of it by diligently pursuing rehab. Procrastination tends to get in the way once you're in the comfort of your own home, though, which is why we love the convenience and accountability of **FitMi** (our interactive home therapy device).

## 7. Prevent possible falls

Until mobility and balance is restored through rehab exercise, it's important to take safety precautions to prevent falls. Ways to help prevent falls are:

- Installing grab bars and handrails
- Adding non-slip mats to the shower
- Working on **core and balance exercises** 11/14/2016

If you have fallen once after stroke, then you are at risk of repeat falls. It is absolutely essential to take all necessary precautions and inform your caregivers of any falls. They can help ensure your safety and check in on you to make sure that you're okay.

## 8. Purchase any safety equipment you need

Some stroke survivors refuse to add safety equipment to their home for the sake of saving money, but this is simply not safe. Stroke deficits increase your risk of falling and other potentially life-threatening hazards – and being prepared can save your life. So be sure to install all safety equipment that your **physiatrist** suggests!

If you are hesitant to install safety equipment because you don't want your home to reflect your disability, then you may benefit from this article on [how to overcome shame after stroke](#).

## 9. Call your insurance company and ask questions

The medical expenses of stroke recovery can quickly stack up, and it's essential to know what's covered by your insurance plan and what isn't. See the second-half of this article 8/5/2015 on **health insurance** to find a list of questions to ask your provider.

## 10. Join a support group if it appeals to you

Support is absolutely essential during challenging times. And nothing beats the support of someone who understands exactly what you're going through, which is why many survivors choose to join support groups.

You can try to find a support group through the [ASA's support group finder](#). If you can't find any in your area, you can always join an online group like our [stroke support group on Facebook](#).

Or you can join both!

## 11. Be aware of possible emotional changes

If you find yourself experiencing sporadic emotions, or an increase in negative emotions, then it's important to educate yourself of the emotional side effects of stroke. If you experience sporadic emotions, then you may suffer from a medically diagnosed post-stroke side effect called **emotional lability**. This condition is caused by damage to the emotion center of the brain.

If you believe that you suffer from emotional lability, it's important to talk with your doctor. S/he may be able to help.

If you find yourself experiencing more negative emotions – but they don't seem to be sporadic – then you may need to **address your psychology and practice more mindfulness**. They are both great ways of coping with the negative after effects of stroke.

## 12. Inform your caregivers of possible emotional changes (\*equally important!)

Why should you tell your caregivers about all this personal stuff? Because they need to know that your emotions are not necessarily because of them. Your caregivers want the best for you, and if they find you getting upset, they might feel like they're doing something wrong.

By opening yourself up and telling your loved ones that your stroke may have affected your emotions, it will help them understand what you're going through encourage them to support you.

## 13. Gather the phone numbers and emails of your physicians and therapists

During stroke recovery, there are many unique variables that can change after you are discharged from the hospital. It's always a good idea to get the contact information from your care team in case you have any questions. Never rely on them in the case of an emergency, dial 9-1-1 instead!

## 14. Take a deep dive into researching various therapies

Because **every stroke is different**, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to rehabilitation. Therefore, the responsibility falls on you to research options that may benefit you better than your current regimen.

For the basics, see our article on [7 methods for motor recovery after stroke](#). But you don't have to stop there. There are many other forms of therapy that we've seen other survivors try, like craniosacral therapy, hypnotherapy, psychotherapy, and more.

As long as it makes you feel better and it's safe, then it's totally worth a shot. And since you have the email and phone number of your rehabilitation specialists, you can run it by them to make sure they're on board with it, too!

## 15. Take the slow but steady route

The first few months of stroke recovery are often characterized by rapid improvement. This is caused by the brain's 'heightened state of plasticity' during that time. However, after those first few months, the rate of recovery will slow down – sometimes drastically. It's important not to view this slow-down as a sign of failure. Rather, you're just getting started.

Recovery often takes months or years for many people, and the **slow and steady pace** will serve you very well. Try to avoid burnout by 'going hard' for short amounts of time. The brain needs stimulation – but not too much!

## 16. Keep your motivation up

The frustrations that inevitably accompany recovery can cause you to lose hope, which is why **maintaining motivation** is so important. We suggest reading **inspirational quotes** and reading self-help books specifically for stroke recovery to keep your spirits lifted.

When you read positive words, your mind starts to generate the feeling of positivity. And the more you surround yourself with encouragement, the farther you will go.

That's why we're so passionate about our **stroke support group** and our recently launched self-help book for stroke recovery called *Healing and Happiness after Stroke*.

All in all, it's important to prepare yourself for the road to recovery ahead. It will be challenging, but that's exactly why survivors become stronger after stroke.