



let's talk about

The Stroke Family Caregiver

People who provide help for stroke survivors are often called **caregivers**. Everyone involved in helping a stroke survivor is a caregiver. It can be the spouse, family members or friends. Often one person, spouse, adult child or parent, will provide most of the care.

It's important that caregivers and stroke survivors strive to be "care partners" in their efforts. It's often a challenge for both to adjust to their changed roles. The adjustment may be easier if the caregiver and stroke survivor share in decision-making as much as possible and try to share their feelings honestly.



What should a caregiver do?

There is no one "job description" that explains what all caregivers do. Each caregiver's responsibilities vary according to the unique needs of the stroke survivor. Role changes and new skills may need to be learned. Common responsibilities of caregiving include:

- Providing physical help with personal care and transportation.
- Managing financial, legal and business affairs.
- Monitoring behavior to ensure safety.
- Managing housework and making meals.
- Coordinating health care and monitoring or giving medications.
- Helping the survivor maintain learned rehab skills and work to improve them.
- Providing emotional support for the stroke survivor and family members.

- Encouraging the stroke survivor to continue working toward recovery and to be as independent as possible.

Is there assistance for caregivers?

Many people find caring for another person very rewarding. But there may be times when a stroke survivor's needs are too much for any one person. Sometimes a caregiver just needs a break. These breaks are important to not only the caregiver but also to the stroke survivor. These community resources may be helpful:

- **Adult day care** — professional supervision of adults in a social setting during the day.
- **Adult foster homes** — supervised care in approved (licensed) private homes.
- **Meal programs (Meals on Wheels)** — a federally sponsored nutrition program.

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- **Home health aide service** — in-home personal care assistance.
- **Homemaker assistance** — supervised, trained personnel who help with household duties.
- **Respite care** — people come into the home for a limited time to give caregivers a break. Some nursing homes also provide short-term respite care.

Is training available for family caregivers?

Finding caregiver training locally can be hit or miss. A good place to start is with your local Area Agency on Aging. Visit eldercare.gov to find an office near you.



Hiring a home health aide is a great way to give yourself a break from the rigors of being the primary caregiver.

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1 Call **1-888-4-STROKE** (1-888-478-7653) to learn more about stroke or find local support groups, or visit **StrokeAssociation.org**.
- 2 Sign up to get *Stroke Connection* magazine, a free magazine for stroke survivors and caregivers at **strokeconnection.org**.
- 3 Connect with others sharing similar journeys with stroke by joining our Support Network at **strokeassociation.org/supportnetwork**.

Do you have questions for the doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write your questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider.

For example:

Is there a stroke support group or caregiver support group in my area?

Do you know of any other national organizations that support caregivers?

My Questions:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one. Visit strokeassociation.org/letstalkaboutstroke to learn more.