

Let's Talk About the Stroke Family Caregiver

What is a stroke family caregiver?

People who provide help for stroke survivors are often called caregivers. Everyone involved in helping a stroke survivor is a caregiver — the spouse, family members and friends. Often one person, generally a spouse, 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 needs of the stroke survivor. This may require several adjustments. 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 meal preparation.
- Coordinating health care and monitoring 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 be as independent as possible.

Is there assistance for caregivers?

Many people find caring for another person very rewarding. But there are times when a stroke survivor's needs are too much for any one person. Sometimes a caregiver just needs a break. 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.

- 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.

How can I learn more?

- Talk to your doctor, nurse or other healthcare professionals. Ask about other stroke topics. This is one of many *Let's Talk About Stroke* fact sheets.
- For more information about stroke, or to get more fact sheets, call the American Stroke Association at 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653) or visit us online at StrokeAssociation.org.
- If you or someone you know has had a stroke, call the American

Stroke Association's "Warmline" at 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653), and:

- ✓ Speak with other stroke survivors and caregivers trained to answer your questions and offer support
- ✓ Get information on stroke support groups in your area.
- ✓ Sign up to get *Stroke Connection*, a free magazine for stroke survivors and caregivers.

Do you have questions for your doctor or nurse?

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

What services are available in my community?

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

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