



GETTING BACK INTO THE COMMUNITY



This guide will help to answer questions about how to get back into the community after a stroke.

Remember there is life after stroke! Getting out of the house creates the opportunity to regain a sense of freedom, control and independence. Going to places you want to go, doing the things you enjoy, and spending time with other people will help the recovery process.

There are three steps that most people have to take into consideration when getting back out into the community after a stroke.

- » **Identify what strengths and abilities exist both for stroke survivors and caregivers.**
- » **Identify what needs and wants have to be met.**
- » **Research and find resources and programs in the community that meet those needs and wants.**

Developing goals or a plan of action can help you make decisions and choices. Goals are most helpful when they are realistic. Goals also need to be flexible. It is also helpful to set a time for completion of your goals. Breaking each goal into smaller steps helps progress. Achieving goals is rewarding and encouraging.

IDENTIFYING (STRENGTHS) ABILITIES

It is helpful to consider these areas when thinking about managing out in the community.

- » **Physical** e.g. mobility, toileting, activity tolerance and fatigue.
- » **Communication** e.g. expressing needs, participating in conversation and understanding directions.
- » **Visual and Perceptual** e.g. finding the way, using public transit, understanding signs, crossing the road.
- » **Behaviour** e.g. emotional difficulties, depression, aggression.
- » **Social** e.g. feeling comfortable around others, involvement in group activity, friendliness.
- » **Financial** e.g. being able to handle money, ability to pay for programs and services using cash and electronic devices.
- » **Availability** consider other responsibilities. Include family, work, community, and recreational commitments. Supports such as family caregivers and friends and how they are currently helping.

IDENTIFYING NEEDS AND WANTS

It is helpful to consider these areas.

- » **Physical** e.g. fitness exercises, walking, hiking, swimming.
- » **Social** e.g. family activity (spending time with family), conversation, group activities, joining societies or clubs.

- » **Psychological** e.g. support, counseling.
- » **Creative** e.g. art, music, drama, literature.
- » **Spiritual** e.g. worship, meditation, activity with religious groups, yoga.
- » **Occupational** e.g. paid work, volunteering, re-training, vocational guidance.
- » **Recreational** e.g. games, seasonal celebrations, sports, entertainment.

In everyday life, all of us rely on our work, family and community activities, as well as on our hobbies and interests to give us a sense of purpose and self-worth. Being active in former interests helps in feeling good about life. After a stroke, the changes that occur can mean there is also the need to develop new interests and involvements.

Developing new interests, strengths and abilities will be made easier by setting long- range as well as short-term goals. A good way to achieve these goals is by planned daily activities.

FINDING RESOURCES AND PROGRAMS

It is helpful to consider a variety of places that can provide resources and programs.

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| » Places of Worship | » Libraries |
| » Community Centres | » Recreation Facilities |
| » Gymnasiums | » Swimming Pools |
| » Rehabilitation Centres | » Resorts |
| » Service Clubs | » Hospitals and Local Health Units |
| » Non-profit groups, associations and societies | » Internal supports such as family, extended family and friends |

There are a few ways you can find out what is available in the community, e.g. ask others; talk to you doctor, therapist, family, friends, neighbours, other stroke survivors or people you know that have an interest in stroke; or do internet research.

If you don't use a computer yourself ask someone to help to search for resources and programs such as:

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| » Stroke Support Groups | » Stroke Recovery Groups |
| » Adapted Exercise Programs | » Caregiver Support and Education |
| » Aphasia Groups | » Therapists specializing in stroke |
| » Speech language pathologists | |

It is also helpful to keep all of your information in one place such as binder with plastic sleeves for brochures, bus schedules, etc.

Here are a few questions to ask about community programs to see if they are right for you:

- » **How long has the program been running?**
- » **Who teaches/leads the program?**
- » **Length of sessions, cost and frequency**
- » **What requirements are necessary to take part?**
- » **Are the days and times convenient?**

PLANNING AHEAD

When you go out, plan ahead to make sure that your needs can be met. Ask questions before going somewhere new, such as:

- » **How easy is it to get to the place?**
- » **How far is the parking area from the entrance?**
- » **Are there suitable parking spaces?**
- » **Are there steps leading into the building?**
- » **Are there ramps leading into the building?**
- » **Are doorways wide enough for a wheelchair?**
- » **Is there a suitable bathroom?**
- » **Is there an elevator in the building?**

Consider these options for getting around:

- » **Ride with family and friends**
- » **Take a taxi, shuttle bus or van**
- » **Use public transport – buses, HandiDart, trains and subways**
- » **Find a volunteer driver**
- » **Try a scooter, walk if you can**
- » **Ask family and friends about the services they use**



Sincere thanks to the Stroke Recovery Association of British Columbia, an affiliate of After Stroke, a program of March of Dimes Canada, for creating this resource - your experience and support have added incredible value.

For more information on Guides to Recovering from a Stroke visit our website at afterstroke.marchofdimes.ca