



## DAILY LIVING

AFTER STROKE - DAILY LIVING



**This guide will help to answer questions about how to successfully return home and resume daily living after stroke.**

Changes following stroke may change the ability to perform activities of daily living such as dressing, grooming, eating, bathing, and toileting. Establishing a routine and repeated practice of activities of daily living will help to improve independence. Don't push too hard-hurrying never helps.

Talk to a professional occupational therapist about all aspects of activities of daily living after stroke. They can help you find the approach and the equipment you need.

## **DRESSING TIPS**

Avoid tight-fitting sleeves, armholes, pant legs and waistlines that may be difficult to get in and out of. Select clothes with fasteners in the front. Wear pants with an elastic waistband. Replace buttons, zippers and laces with Velcro fasteners.

Try out dressing aids (gadgets and devices that make dressing easier such as a long-handled shoe horn) and adaptable clothing. Attach key rings to zippers to make them easier to grasp and hold while pulling them up or down.

## **GROOMING TIPS**

Use squeeze bottles and soap dispensers, which may be easier to use compared to slippery bar soaps. Use suction pads to hold grooming tools in place on a counter, to make them easier to use with one hand. Suction pads can be found at any local hardware store.

Use a flip-top toothpaste tube rather than one with a twist on cap. Use an electric toothbrush or one with a large handle that will be easier to grasp. An electric razor can be simpler and safer to use than wet shaving.

## **EATING TIPS**

Cut foods into smaller pieces before chewing. Choose soft foods such as cooked cereals, mashed potatoes, or soups. Use a blender or food processor to puree foods.

Use silverware with larger handles or rubber grip handles that are easier to grasp. Use plate guards (a ring around a plate) to help keep food on the plate when using one hand.

Use a rubberized pad under a plate to keep it from sliding around.

## **BATHING TIPS**

Install sturdy hand rails or grab bars in the tub or shower. Install non-slip flooring strips inside and outside of the tub. Use bath tub or shower benches. Install easy-to-use water control knobs with easily seen settings or long-handled levers.

Use an adjustable or handheld showerhead. Put bathing supplies in a place that is easy to reach. Make sure the central water temperature is not too hot.

## TOILETING TIPS

Begin a toileting schedule in which you go to the bathroom around the same time each day, such as when you wake up, before and after meals, and before bed. Use a cane, walker, wheelchair, or grab bars to stabilize and balance yourself whenever you get on or off the toilet. Install a raised toilet seat or toilet seat riser to reduce the distance and difficulty in sitting down and getting up.

Use a three-in-one commode chair with a raised seat, grab bars, and a removable bucket. It can be kept near a bed or chair or used over an existing toilet with the bucket removed.

Use disposable underwear just in case you have an accident. Keep a change of clothing handy in the bathroom or with you for the unexpected. Also take a change of clothes and extra underpants for trips outside of the home.

Completing these activities of daily living independently may be very important to you as a stroke survivor. However, some tasks may require assistance from others. It is alright to ask for help.

## COMMON PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

Talk to a professional occupational therapist about all aspects of activities of daily living after stroke. They are the experts! Find different ways of doing things and use gadgets and devices. They can make activities of daily living easier and less frustrating for stroke survivor and caregiver.

### PROBLEM - HEMIPARESIS

This means having one side of the body paralysed. If a person has hemiparesis any task, such as dressing, that requires two hands and both sides of the body becomes more difficult.

#### SOLUTIONS

- » **Dress the affected side first.**
- » **Use the affected side as much as possible.**
- » **Be careful and go slowly to reduce the risk of injury during activities of daily living.**

### PROBLEM - PERCEPTUAL DEFICITS

This can cause neglect – that is decreased awareness and attention of the paralysed side. It can also lead to loss of figure-ground discrimination - that is difficulty finding objects which blend into the background.

Another problem can be right-left discrimination – that is difficulty distinguishing between right and left.

#### SOLUTIONS

- » **Objects like clothing and eating utensils may need to be placed in the middle or on the unaffected side.**

- » **Provide cueing towards the affected side.**
- » **Use colour contrast.**
- » **Arrange objects in an order which will make it easier before starting the task.**

## **PROBLEM - APRAXIA**

This means inability to plan out movements despite having the necessary range of motion, strength, and coordination. It may cause difficulty in planning or initiating the task. It may also account for inconsistencies in people's ability to dress-sometimes they can, sometimes they can't.

### **SOLUTIONS**

- » **Plan and structure the task prior to starting, provide cues as needed.**
- » **Use labels to aid orientation of objects.**
- » **Use consistent set up and sequencing.**
- » **Practice.**

## **PROBLEM - PERSEVERATION**

This is difficulty with moving from one idea to the next. It may interfere with an individual's ability to go onto the next step of the task.

### **SOLUTIONS**

- » **Have the person plan the task prior to beginning and provide cueing as needed.**
- » **It may be necessary to stop one task and redirect the person to go on to the next step.**

## **PROBLEM - FATIGUE**

An individual may get easily fatigued during activities of daily living. Fatigue increases the risk for injury and falls.

### **SOLUTIONS**

- » **Create frequent rest breaks.**
- » **Monitor for signs of fatigue such as loss of strength lack of endurance and irritability.**
- » **Encourage the individual to take it slowly and do things gradually.**
- » **Proper set up, adaptive clothing, and assistive devices and gadgets may help to conserve energy.**



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](http://afterstroke.marchofdimes.ca)