



After Stroke

Realizing the Possible

ADJUSTING THE HOME AFTER A STROKE

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This guide will help to answer two questions:

What can be done to make the home safe?

How can the home be set up to help recovery?

It is a good idea to have a trial visit home before discharge from the hospital so that changes can be made before returning home. Talk to a professional occupational therapist (OT) about all aspects of setting up your home after stroke. An OT may be able visit you in your home after you leave hospital to assist with setting up your home after stroke.

Some tasks may require assistance from others. Ask for help if needed.

ASSISTIVE DEVICES

These are any piece of equipment used to make daily activities easier e.g. walking, bathing, dressing and eating. Talk to an OT about what might be needed and where to get devices in the community.

TELEPHONE

A phone should be easily accessible in every room of the house. Keep all important numbers by every telephone in the home. Post emergency phone numbers where they can be easily seen. A large button phone is easier to read and use. Phones can be programmed for one-touch dialing.

MOBILITY

Getting into the house can be a problem – a portable ramp is an affordable solution.

Entryways, hallways and doorways may need to be adjusted to allow access and movement- especially for wheelchair users. Handrails or grab bars on the walls can help with getting around. A stair lift can be fitted to transport a person up or down stairs while seated.

FLOORS AND STAIRWAYS

Get rid of clutter. Keep electrical cords clear of walking areas. Use rugs with a non-skid backing or fasten them down with double-sided tape. Avoid floor coverings with edges that can be a risk for tripping. Make sure there is good lighting on stairways. Turn on the light before entering a room to make it easy to see obstacles that can cause falls.

KITCHEN

A step stool is useful for reaching objects in high cupboards. Make sure a fire extinguisher is within easy reach. Choose appliances that are safer to use; e.g. kettle with automatic off-switch. Oven gloves reduce the risk of burns.

Lever handles on taps are easier to use. Make items in the fridge, freezer or cupboards easy to reach. Put labels on containers to make identifying foods easier. Large handles make utensils and cooking tools easier to use.

A spiked or non-skid cutting board can be helpful. A blender or food processor can make foods easier to eat. The height of countertops can be adjusted for wheelchair users.

DINING ROOM

Silverware with larger handles or rubber grip handles are easier to grasp. Plate guards help keep food on the plate when using one hand. A non-slip pad or a damp washcloth under a plate stops it from sliding around.

Drinking by using a cup with a lid and a straw can be easier. Dining chairs might need cushions or back supports added to create a good position for eating.

A person in a wheelchair needs a dining table that is the right height.

BATHROOM

Use a non-slip bathmat in the tub and shower. Make sure the central water temperature is not too hot. Test temperature before bathing or showering. Use a thermometer if needed.

Taps that are easy to operate can help to make sure water isn't too hot or cold. Mark with colored tape to help set the control to the right temperature.

Grab-bars or proper handrails that are professionally installed can be helpful. A professional OT can advise. A tub bench can be used for sitting and sliding into the tub.

A shower chair can be used in the shower or bathtub. An adjustable or handheld showerhead allows water flow to be raised or lowered. Put bathing supplies in a place that is easy to reach. A long-handled sponge can be useful.

Squeeze bottles and soap pumps may be easier to use than bar soap. Towel rails should be easy to reach. Suction pads can be used for people who can use only one hand to hold tools and containers in place on a counter top.

An electric toothbrush or one with a large handle is easier to grasp. A flip-top tube and a squeezer for toothpaste may also be helpful. An electric shaver can be easier and safer than a razor.

TOILET

Handrails, or grab bars can help.

A raised toilet seat can make it easier to get up and down.

A three-in-one commode chair which has a raised seat, grab bars on both sides of the chair, and a removable bucket can also be very useful.

Accidents can happen - keep a change of clothing handy in the bathroom or with you for the unexpected.

BEDROOM

Accidents can happen in the dark - make sure the lighting is good and keep a flashlight beside the bed.

Have a telephone and light switch within easy reach of the bed. Keep pathways clear, especially for access to the toilet.

Organize clothing and personal items so that they are easy to reach when needed. Wear clothes that are easy to put on and take off. Velcro fasteners or elastic in place of buttons, zippers and shoelaces can make fastening clothes easier.

There are gadgets to make dressing easier -e.g. a reacher, button hook, a sock aid, long handled shoe horn.

A commode chair near the bed can be used if getting to the bathroom in the night is difficult.

Waterproof pads can be placed underneath sheets on the bed.



Sincere thanks to the Stroke Recovery Association of British Columbia, an affiliation 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