

Patient Information

Stroke - Help for Patients and You

How can I help?

Relatives and friends often feel very helpless when stroke illness occurs. There are many things that relatives can do which can assist the stroke team in the challenge of recovery.

Contact with relatives

All relatives have questions that need answering either over the phone or in person. In large families, this takes up lots of nursing time. The team would like to speak to all members of the family but this will inevitably mean that our patients receive less nursing time. We have put together some tips which will help us utilise our time well and answer your family's questions:

- Pick one person (a member of the family, close friend or carer) to act as a representative who could phone the hospital each day. Ask remaining family to phone the representative so they can pass on any news.
- All family members should pass their questions to representative who will ask questions and pass on the answers.
- Discuss with ward staff when the best time would be to phone or speak to the stroke team.
- Arrange to speak to the stroke specialist nurse.

Visiting

Stroke can be a devastating illness. Family and friends understandably want to spend as much time as possible with the stroke victim to support them through their illness. One of the most unrecognised symptoms following stroke is the extreme tiredness that a stroke survivor experiences. The cause of this is thought to be that the brain has to work much harder to process all information. It also has to learn new pathways to get messages through to limbs and organs. Add to this the effort required by therapies and the tiredness the patient feels is understandable.

We have put together some tips, which will help you support the stroke survivor:

- Visit only during visiting times. This allows our patients to rest, receive therapy and sleep. Carers are welcome to come in and participate in care with the therapists, when it is deemed appropriate and safe. This can be arranged by speaking with the ward staff and therapists.
- Do not stay for the entire visiting period. Leave the patient to have a short rest. You could go for a cup of coffee and then return.
- Only allow two visitors at a time.
- Children may visit but their visits should be kept short. Advice on the amount of visitors at a time should be sought from one of the stroke team as in some cases it may be frustrating to some patients.
- Allow the patient time to talk but if there is a speech problem avoid asking lots of questions.
- **Always be positive.**
- Keep the patient aware of current news both at home and in the world.

Activity

This will start as soon as it is safe to get the patient out of bed. Recovery relies on restoration of normal function and prevention of complications. Patients will be encouraged to adhere to an activity regime that will aim to restore normal function but is finely tuned against exercise tolerance.

Patient Information

Belongings

While it is important that patients do not lose their sense of identity it is also important that they do not become upset if their valuables are lost. It is best to take belongings home. Please tell a member of staff which items you are taking. Following a stroke patients often suffer from body image problems. We aim to limit the effect these have by ensuring their personal hygiene level is maintained.

The patient will need a **well stocked** toiletries bag, this should include:

- Soap.
- Shower gel.
- Talc.
- Shampoo.
- Toothbrush and toothpaste.
- Deodorant.
- Razor and gel (if used).
- Make up (if used).
- Brush or comb.
- Perfume or aftershave (if used).
- Please **do not** supply flannels, sponges, or towels.

Rings: Please remove rings from the hand affected by the stroke. It is not unusual for the hand to swell and any rings would have to be removed using a ring cutter, to prevent damage to the finger.

Clothing: In the initial stages of stroke illness most patients will not need to get dressed. Some patients like to wear their own night attire however, these frequently become lost or soiled. This will cause the patient some distress it is therefore better to use hospital clothing during the initial stages.

Footwear: It is extremely helpful if the patient has sensible well fitting footwear. Slippers can create a hazard, trainers or flat shoes are best. These may need to be a size bigger as the patient's feet may become swollen.

Research: Stroke illness and treatment is now much more advanced but still not yet fully understood. You may be contacted by the research nurse to enlist in one of the international research trials the Trust is currently undertaking. The research nurse will talk to you about the research trials and the implications for stroke patients.

Sources of information

Stroke Association

Helpline: 0845 30 33 100

www.stroke.org.uk**Your GP****NHS Direct**

Telephone 0845 4647

www.nhsdirect.uk**Conquest Hospital**

Egerton Stroke Unit - Telephone: (01424) 755255 Ext: 7028 or 2734.

Sarah Snowball Stroke Nurse - Telephone: (01424) 755255 Ext: 8646.

Patient Information

Eastbourne District General Hospital

Wilmington Stroke Unit - Telephone: (01323) 417400 Ext: 4490 or 4712

Jane Gallagher, Stroke Specialist Nurse - Telephone: (01323) 417400 or bleep 3112

Important information

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments please contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) – details below.

Hand hygiene

The trust is committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for staff use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

Other formats

This information is available in alternative formats such as large print or electronically on request. Interpreters can also be booked. Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) offices, found in the main reception areas:

Conquest Hospital

Email: palsh@esht.nhs.uk - Telephone: **01424 758090**

Eastbourne District General Hospital

Email: palse@esht.nhs.uk - Telephone: **01323 435886**

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

Reference

The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information:

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Dr LCA Conrad, Consultant Lead in Stroke at the Eastbourne District General Hospital

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