

You are not alone

When a stroke suddenly occurs affecting you or someone you love, it feels like your world is in pieces. Even after a hospital stay and rehabilitation, there are often unanswered questions and concerns, such as “How can I reclaim my life and be as active and independent as possible?” While a stroke can bring many challenges, taking the right approach to managing life in the new circumstances is key to achieving maximum recovery and successful reintegration into the community. A full productive life after stroke is possible!

Fortunately, you are not alone. There are over 300,000 Canadians living today who have survived a stroke and there are hundreds of stroke survivors in support groups and associations across Canada ready to help answer your questions and ease your concerns.

Many stroke survivors said that talking with other stroke survivors greatly helped them in their recovery. From other stroke survivors you can get not only emotional support, but also tips and ideas on how to cope day to day. The most common response was to take an active role in your recovery. The motto of the Stroke Recovery Association of Manitoba says it all: “If it is to be, it’s up to me!”

Q: How can a person take an active role in their recovery?

An active role really means getting informed and getting in touch with the available resources. This applies to both survivors and their caregivers. While caregivers may not have had a stroke, the impact on their lives can be just as great. If you don’t understand the reason for the treatments or medications you are receiving, ask a member of your health care team. You can also call Stroke Recovery Canada and we will send you information about different treatment options and information about medications commonly prescribed to stroke survivors.

Start a diary or keep a notepad with you to write down symptoms you are experiencing or questions you may have so that you have everything in one place when you go to talk to your doctor.

Join a stroke recovery program in your area. All across Canada there are many fantastic programs for survivors and caregivers – from social clubs to exercise classes, day programs to support groups.

Remember that recovery is ongoing. In the first two years after your stroke, most stroke survivors make significant improvements. However, after two years they may find that their recovery slows down. For most survivors, while recovery may slow down, improvements can still be made. As one stroke survivor says, "Twenty years after my stroke, I'm still getting better and doing more. Never, never give up!"

It is important to remember that stroke survivors are like a snowflake – everyone is affected by their stroke a little differently. In looking at different treatment options or when discussing medications with your doctor, it is important to keep this in mind. A stroke can be emotionally stressful for both survivors and their families.

Remember to take care of both your physical AND emotional needs. Support groups can help greatly in dealing with emotional stress. Depression is common among both stroke survivors and stroke caregivers. Talk with your doctor about your feelings.

Most importantly, don't give up! Take one day at a time, set goals, make yourself a schedule, and develop a daily routine.

Q: How can Stroke Recovery Canada help?

At Stroke Recovery Canada, we offer post-recovery support, information, resources, education, and programs for stroke survivors and their families. We connect local peer support groups across the country and provide Canadians with the information and resources needed to reconnect their lives.

In a local group, you can share personal experiences, exchange valuable information, and get mutual support. Through participation in local meetings, activities and seminars, you can develop new skills, make new friends, and gain an understanding of what you are going through and what you can expect.

Stroke Recovery Canada has a database of programs and services for stroke survivors. We also distribute a free newsletter with up-to-date information on stroke recovery. Call us at **1-888-540-6666**. Also, visit **www.strokerecovery Canada.com**. Remember, you are not alone, we are here to help.