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## Rehabilitation after stroke

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### Summary

- The purpose of stroke rehabilitation is to get the most out of your life after a stroke.
  - Early treatment and rehabilitation after a stroke helps many people to regain a lot of function.
  - Rehabilitation can begin as soon as you are stable while you are in hospital and will be ongoing once you leave hospital.
  - The types of rehabilitation will depend on your individual needs.
  - Your rehabilitation may include activities to re-learn skills you have lost since the stroke, or to learn new skills to help your everyday activities if you have a disability.
  - Stroke rehabilitation options include activities and technologies to help your physical health, mental health, and thinking and memory.
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The purpose of stroke rehabilitation is to get the most out of your life and abilities after a stroke. Early treatment and rehabilitation after a stroke helps many people to regain a lot of function. Many of the improvements are made in the first six months after treatment, but improvement can continue for years.

### Purpose of rehabilitation after stroke

The type of rehabilitation you choose will depend on how your function has been affected. Functional changes after a stroke will depend on which part of the brain was damaged and by how much. The most recent data for Australia shows that after a stroke, slightly more than one third of people have a disability that has affected their daily activities.

Rehabilitation works towards:

- re-learning skills that were lost when your brain was damaged by the stroke
- learning new ways of performing tasks to get around any disabilities you may have.

Rehabilitation will begin as soon as you are stable in a hospital stroke unit or medical ward. This may be as soon as 24 hours after your stroke. You may go to a rehabilitation facility or you may go back into the community where your rehabilitation can continue as an outpatient or using community healthcare professionals.

Your stroke rehabilitation activities may vary with time and as your needs and skill levels change. Your needs should be central to the types of rehabilitation approaches chosen. Your family and carers can also be a part of your choices about rehabilitation and be involved with your rehabilitation activities.

### Stroke rehabilitation therapies

As well as your doctor, other healthcare professionals who may be a part of your rehabilitation team include:

- clinical psychologists
- neuropsychologists
- occupational therapists
- physiotherapists
- psychiatrists
- rehabilitation nurses
- social workers
- speech pathologists.

Your rehabilitation may include activities to improve:

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- muscle strength and coordination
- mobility – using walking aids, canes or leg braces
- use of affected limbs
- range of motion and tension in affected joints
- communication – regaining abilities in speech, reading and writing
- thinking and memory
- mental health.

Rehabilitation can also involve technologies such as video games, robotics and functional electrical stimulation to improve various skills.

### **Where to get help**

- Your doctor
- In an emergency, always call triple zero (000)
- Emergency department of your nearest hospital
- NURSE-ON-CALL Tel. 1300 60 60 24 – for expert health information and advice (24 hours, 7 days)
- StrokeLine Tel. 1800 787 653 – for information on stroke treatment, prevention and recovery

**This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by:**

Department of Health and Human Services

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