



Physiotherapy after stroke

Information for patients



Physiotherapy is an important part of your rehabilitation. Physiotherapy staff will work with you and provide you with expert practical guidance to help your recuperation and recovery.

A stroke can cause damage to the part of your brain that controls movement. Our brains can't grow new cells to replace the ones that have been damaged after a stroke, so your recovery depends on your brain's ability to reorganise its undamaged cells and make up for what has been lost.

HOW CAN A STROKE AFFECT MY MOVEMENT?

You may experience **weakness**, or even complete paralysis (called hemiplegia) in the muscles of one side of your body. Your limbs may feel heavy because the weakness makes them difficult to move, or they may feel numb (like after you have had an injection at the dentist). You may have problems with your **posture and balance**, making it difficult to stay upright and you may be more likely to have a fall. Some muscles and joints on your affected side such as your wrist, fingers and ankle may become **stiff**; this can limit your movement. Some people develop muscle spasms and tightness in their muscles; this is called spasticity. Early rehabilitation is important to help prevent joint stiffness or muscle tightness.

The shoulder can also be vulnerable to pain, especially if your arm is pulled, or its weight is allowed to 'drag down'. This can be called subluxation, where your shoulder becomes painful and difficult to move. It is important to take care of your arm. Prevention is better than cure.

WHAT IS PHYSIOTHERAPY?



Physiotherapists use techniques such as exercise, manipulation, facilitation and electrical stimulation treatment to help you heal and recover your movement.

The main focus is to help you learn to use both sides of your body again and to regain as much strength and movement as possible.

STROKE REHABILITATION TEAM

We work with other members of the stroke team to make sure we can help with the range of problems that your stroke can cause. Our team consists of Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists, Speech and Language Therapists, Doctors and Nurses (plus other specialists).

HOW CAN PHYSIOTHERAPY HELP?

Depending on your needs, your Physio team will:

- ❖ Advise on how you should be positioned when lying in bed, or sitting up in a chair
- ❖ Motivate you to be actively involved in your physiotherapy sessions to help you regain efficient patterns of movement
- ❖ Offer therapy to strengthen your limbs and teach you how to move again as independently as possible
- ❖ Work together with the rehabilitation team, your carer and family or friends to support your recovery in a co-ordinated way

It is important to be **as active as soon as possible** after your stroke - the physio team will encourage you to be as mobile as possible, whether this is continuing with your previous activities, or just sitting in a chair.

As time goes on, full recovery is less likely for people with more severe problems, so physiotherapy focuses on helping you learn new techniques to deal with your new situation; for example, using equipment, or doing things a different way.



WHERE WILL I HAVE THERAPY?

The Physio treatment room on the ward, initially. Once you are ready, you should progress to more active sessions in the rehabilitation area, or our physiotherapy gym.

WHAT DOES PHYSIOTHERAPY INVOLVE?

Once you are medically stable, you should be assessed by a physiotherapist. This assessment should take account of any health problems you had before your stroke. We'll make sure that any movement problems are identified at the start so that a treatment plan can be organised to give you every chance of making a good recovery.

You will be encouraged to sit out of bed as soon as you are able. Staff will assist you with this.

Correct positioning when sitting and lying is important to assist your recovery.



PHYSIOTHERAPY TREATMENT SESSION

Every stroke and amount of recovery is different, therefore the assessment, treatment, therapy goals and discharge plan will vary for each person.

Therapy sessions can include moving around your bed, from bed to chair, sitting to standing, walking with or without support or climbing stairs. This is likely to be a gradual process as you aim to achieve your agreed goals to optimise your recovery.

The physiotherapist will get you standing as soon as you are able to support your own weight and encourage you to use the muscles of your trunk, hips and legs; you may need help to do this to begin with. Your physiotherapist may not encourage you to walk straight away if you need time to recover your strength and flexibility.



EXERCISES

There are no set exercises as each person's symptoms and recovery can be so variable.

You will work with a physiotherapist on the tasks and the movements you are learning to do. You may also work with a physiotherapy assistant, or you may be given tasks and activities to practise on your own outside of therapy sessions.

A Physio will only spend a limited amount of time with you each day so it is important that therapy is carried over into the rest of the day. We'll advise you, your family and other staff how to include movement you have learned in therapy into your everyday activities.



EQUIPMENT

Although some people regain the ability to walk, some do not and others are only able to walk short distances around the house.

We can provide equipment such as walking frames, rollators (walking frames with wheels) and walking sticks to help you get about more easily.



YOUR HOPES AND PLANS

We will work with you to set a number of goals taking account your priorities, hopes and aims. This will ensure your treatment is focused on the things that are important to you.

Your goals will depend on how you have been affected by your stroke and the life you hope to lead in the future. Your goals may be small to start with and involve a simple task, such as reaching for and grasping an object. Each goal you achieve will be a positive step forward and will help to keep you motivated.

HOW CAN MY FAMILY OR CARER HELP?

Families and carers will be asked to bring in suitable clothing and shoes or trainers for physiotherapy sessions.

The physiotherapist may provide simple instructions or exercise leaflets so exercises can be practised between therapy sessions with your family encouraging and supporting you.

We might encourage a member of your family, or main carer, to attend a rehabilitation session with you, as long as you agree to it.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I LEAVE HOSPITAL?

We will plan your continuing rehabilitation with you before you return home.

If you experience new symptoms or experience new problems, or old ones resurface, you can ask your GP to refer you back to a therapist for re-assessment.

PATIENT CLOTHING SUITABLE FOR PHYSIOTHERAPY

In order to assist with rehabilitation, please bring in the following items of clothing:

Trousers

- ❖ A comfortable loose pair or jogging-type ones are ideal

Tops

- ❖ T-shirt, vest top or loose fitting top

Footwear

- ❖ A supportive walking shoe or trainer

Underwear

Thank you for your co-operation.

The Stroke Rehabilitation Therapy Team

USEFUL CONTACTS

- ❖ CHSS - Chest, Heart & Stroke Scotland
www.chss.org.uk
- ❖ Younger Stroke Survivors www.differentstrokes.co.uk
- ❖ Support for carers. Chest, Heart & Stroke Scotland
www.stroke4carers.org
- ❖ Stroke Support Team
01236 703108
- ❖ Stroke Association
www.stroke.org.uk
- ❖ Lanarkshire mental health website
www.elament.org.uk

**NO LIFE
HALF LIVED**

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NHS Lanarkshire General
Enquiry Line: 0300 30 30 243

NHS inform - The national health information service for Scotland.
www.nhsinform.co.uk
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