

Your Care at Home

Make Your Follow-up Appointment

You need to see your doctor 1 to 2 weeks after you go home.

Your Medicines at Home

Ischemic Stroke Prevention

An important part of stroke care includes taking medicines to prevent more blood clots.

You may get one of the following clot prevention medicines:

- 1. Anticoagulants (“blood thinners”):** Coumadin (Warfarin) or Heparin
 - **Purpose:** To prevent new blood clots from forming.
 - **Action:** Anticoagulants prevent blood clots from forming or growing.
 - **Possible side effects:** Bleeding or bruising.
 - **With these medicines, your doctor needs to watch you closely and you need regular blood tests.**
- 2. Antiplatelets:** Aspirin, Clopidogrel (Plavix), Dipyridamole/Aspirin combination (Aggrenox)
 - **Purpose:** To prevent thrombotic strokes.
 - **Action:** Antiplatelets prevent blood clots from forming or growing.
 - **Possible adverse effects:** Bleeding or bruising.
 - **You do not need regular blood tests when taking these medicines.**

WARNING SIGNALS of BLEEDING

Tell your doctor or nurse if you have any signs of bleeding:

- easy bruising
- bleeding when you brush your teeth
- dark brown urine
- dark brown, red or black stool
- cuts that won't stop bleeding

Warning Signs of a Stroke

If you have neurological symptoms that are different from or much worse than your original symptoms, call your doctor or 911 immediately – **DO NOT WAIT!**

We are able to treat certain types of strokes, but the treatments must be given in a hospital within 4.5 hours after your first symptoms.

**TIME LOST IS BRAIN LOSS.
Do not wait, every minute counts!**

F.A.S.T. will help you recognize symptom(s) of a *stroke*:

1. **F**acial droop is best seen when the person smiles.
2. **A**rm: Ask the person to hold out their arms with hands facing up and close their eyes. One side will drift down in a stroke. Weakness/loss of sensation may be seen in an arm or leg.
3. **S**peech: slurred, inappropriate words, or mute.
4. **T**ime to call your doctor or 911 immediately.

Planning Your Activities

- Do as much as you can for yourself at home. Take breaks and get enough rest. You can also plan activities out of the house.
- Practice the skills and exercises you learned in the hospital.
- Use your weak limbs as much as possible.
- You may continue to receive therapy at home or come to the hospital for outpatient therapy.
- Talk to your doctor about when you can go back to your usual activities.
- You may feel tired after a stroke for many reasons:
 - You may have less energy than before.
 - You may have as much energy as before, but you use it differently.
 - You may feel more tired due to emotional rather than physical changes.
 - You may be depressed. This is a treatable illness that happens to many stroke survivors. Symptoms include: lack of energy, lack of motivation, lack of concentration, or not enjoying anything. Talk to your doctor if you think you may be depressed.

About Your Diet

Eat the kinds of food your speech therapist and dietitian recommend.

Tips on Personal Care and Safety at Home

Bathing:

If you are weak on one side or get dizzy, use a shower chair. Your occupational therapist helps you decide the best shower chair for you.

Prevent Injuries:

- Place things within reach in all rooms; don't reach out for things.
- Use all assistive devices properly.
- Avoid using a bath rug inside the bathroom and remove any rugs that are not nailed down to prevent falls.
- Clear up all barriers in your room, the hall, and doorway.
- **Call 911** or use a lifeline in an emergency.

Emotional Changes After a Stroke

After a stroke, you may have emotional changes. These may be from a biological cause of the stroke, or a psychological cause from the effects of the stroke.

Biological Causes:

- You may have rapid mood changes and episodes of crying or laughing that do not seem to match your mood.
- Post-stroke depression includes feelings of sadness, hopelessness, helplessness, irritability, and/or changes in eating, sleeping, and thinking. You may need treatment for post-stroke depression. Talk to your doctor if you have any of these symptoms and take prescribed medicines.

Psychological Causes:

- Your emotional changes may include feelings of frustration, anxiety, anger, apathy, lack of motivation, and/or depression or sadness. By understanding the effects of stroke and acknowledging these feelings, you can begin to deal with the emotional changes.

How Can I Cope with my Changing Emotions?

- Do not judge your feelings as "good" or "bad." Let yourself cope without feeling guilty about your emotions.
- Talk to people who understand what you are going through: other stroke survivors and health care professionals (for example, doctors, nurses, therapists, and social workers). Ask about joining a support group.
- Think of yourself in a positive way. Allow yourself to make mistakes. Give yourself credit for the progress you have made (large and small). Get enough exercise and find activities that you enjoy.

More Ways to Learn

1. **Watch the Patient Video Education Channel in your Hospital Room.** Follow these instructions to use the video library on many different health topics:
 - Tune to channel 60 on the television set, and follow the on-screen directions.
 - Pacific Campus patients: dial extension 78888, California Campus patients: dial extension 21000, and Davies Campus patients: dial extension 33600.
 - Order videotape for viewing according to category or title by listening to information given over the telephone.
2. **Take a Stroke Education Class: “Stroke Survivor Starting Over”.** This class is free and open to everyone. Classes are held at the California Pacific Regional Rehabilitation Center, Davies Campus (Castro & Duboce Streets). For more information, call 415.600.6380 or 415.600.5340.
3. **Visit Our Community Health Resource Center** for classes and written information on a wide variety of health topics. The Stroke Survivor Support Group meets the first Thursday of the month from 1:00 to 2:30 p.m. CHRC is located at 2100 Webster Street, San Francisco, (415) 923-3155.
4. **Visit the Following Web Sites:**
 - American Stroke Association: www.strokeassociation.org
 - National Library of Medicine: www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/stroke.html
 - National Stroke Association: www.stroke.org
 - Peninsula Stroke Association: www.psastroke.org
 - StrokeNet: www.strokenetwork.org

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References: American Heart Association; American Stroke Association; Castillo-Richmond, et al. Effects of stress Reduction on Carotid Atherosclerosis in Hypertensive American. *Stroke*. 2002; 341:568.

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Note: This information is not meant to replace any information or personal medical advice which you get directly from your doctor(s). If you have any questions about this information, such as the risks or benefits of the treatment listed, please ask your doctor(s).