

# *A Family Guide to Post-Stroke Home Care*

Created for the **Stroke Equity Project**

# Chapter 1: The First 48 Hours

The transition from hospital to home is the most vulnerable time. Your goal is to create a "Recovery Zone."

## 1. Safety First (Fall-Proofing)

- **Remove the Rugs:** Small mats or loose rugs are the #1 cause of falls.
- **Lighting:** Keep pathways bright, even at night. A simple torch or nightlight makes a difference.
- **The Bed:** If possible, use a firm mattress. Ensure the survivor can be reached from both sides.

## 2. The Medication Schedule

Stroke survivors often take many pills. If a dose is missed, blood pressure can spike, causing a second stroke.

Time	Medicine Name	Purpose
Morning	Example: Amlodipine	Blood Pressure
Evening	Example: Aspirin	Blood Thinning

**Caregiver Tip:** Use a "pill box" or yogurt cups labeled with the time of day to keep track. Never stop a medicine because the survivor "seems better."

### One Thing to Remember

Consistency is the best medicine. Set alarms to remember pill times.

## Chapter 2: Feeding with Care

Many stroke survivors suffer from **Dysphagia** (difficulty swallowing). This is dangerous because food can "go down the wrong pipe" and cause pneumonia.

### Adapting Traditional Foods

Watery soups or dry crumbs are the most dangerous. Foods should be "pasty" or "honey-thick."

- **Pap / Ogi / Porridge:** Make it thick enough to hold its shape on a spoon. Do not make it watery.
- **Fufu / Pounded Yam:** Soften it with a little extra broth, and ensure the survivor takes very small, pea-sized bites.
- **Stews:** Blend or mash vegetables and meats until they are a smooth paste.

### Safety Position

Never feed a survivor while they are lying flat. They must sit bolt upright (90 degrees) and remain sitting for 30 minutes after eating.

**Signs of Trouble:** If your loved one coughs, clears their throat frequently, or has a "wet" gurgling voice while eating, STOP feeding. These are signs of silent aspiration.

#### One Thing to Remember

Slow down. A meal that used to take 15 minutes may now take an hour. Patience at the table prevents a trip to the hospital.

## Chapter 3: The New Normal Movement

Stroke patients can recover some of the brain functions that they may have lost.

This is called **Neuroplasticity**.

This requires repetition. Even if they can only move a finger, doing it 50 times a day tells the brain: *"This road is important. Rebuild it."*

### Preventing Pressure Sores

If a survivor stays in one position too long, the skin will die and create a painful, dangerous wound.

Follow the **2-Hour Rule**:

- Turn the person from their back to their side every 2 hours.
- Use pillows to prop up the "weak" arm and leg so they don't dangle.

**Caregiver Tip:** When dressing, always put the cloth on the **weak side first**. When undressing, take it off the **strong side first**.

### One Thing to Remember

Movement is life. Even passive stretching (you moving their limbs for them) keeps the joints from locking up.

## Chapter 4: Healing the Mind

A stroke damages the wires of the heart and mind. You may see changes that feel like a different person has moved into your home.

### 1. Emotional Lability

The survivor may suddenly burst into tears or laugh loudly for no reason. This is often **not** true sadness or joy; it is a "short circuit" in the brain. Do not be offended; wait for it to pass calmly.

### 2. Aphasia (Loss of Words)

Imagine being in a foreign land where you know what you want to say, but only the wrong words come out. This is Aphasia.

- Do not shout; they can hear you, they just can't process the words.
- Use picture boards (pointing to a cup for water).
- Ask Yes/No questions.

**Caregiver Tip:** Frustration is the enemy of recovery. If they can't find a word, tell them, "It's okay. We will try again in a moment."



## Chapter 5: The Caregiver's Sanctuary

You cannot pour tea from an empty pot. If you break down, the survivor's recovery is hurt as well.

- 1. The Rotating Shift:** You are not a superhero. Every caregiver needs 4 hours a day where they are not "on duty." Ask a cousin, a neighbor, or a helper to sit in.
- 2. Forgive Yourself:** Feeling angry or heavy is normal. It is the situation that is bad, not you.
- 3. Seek Community:** Tell your community what you need—whether it is help with laundry or someone to bring a meal.

### One Thing to Remember

Asking for help is a sign of wisdom, not a sign of weakness. A burned-out caregiver cannot heal a survivor.



# Closing the Door on the Second Stroke

Once a person has had one stroke, they are at very high risk for another. We must protect them by focusing on **The Big Three**:

1. **Zero Salt:** No bouillon cubes. Use lemon, garlic, and herbs. Salt is the enemy of the brain.
2. **Morning Meds:** Never miss a blood pressure pill.
3. **Gentle Movement:** Even if they stay in a chair, moving the arms and legs daily keeps blood flowing

## You Are Doing a Great Work.

Healing takes time, but with your love and these tools, your family will find its way to a new dawn.

