

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

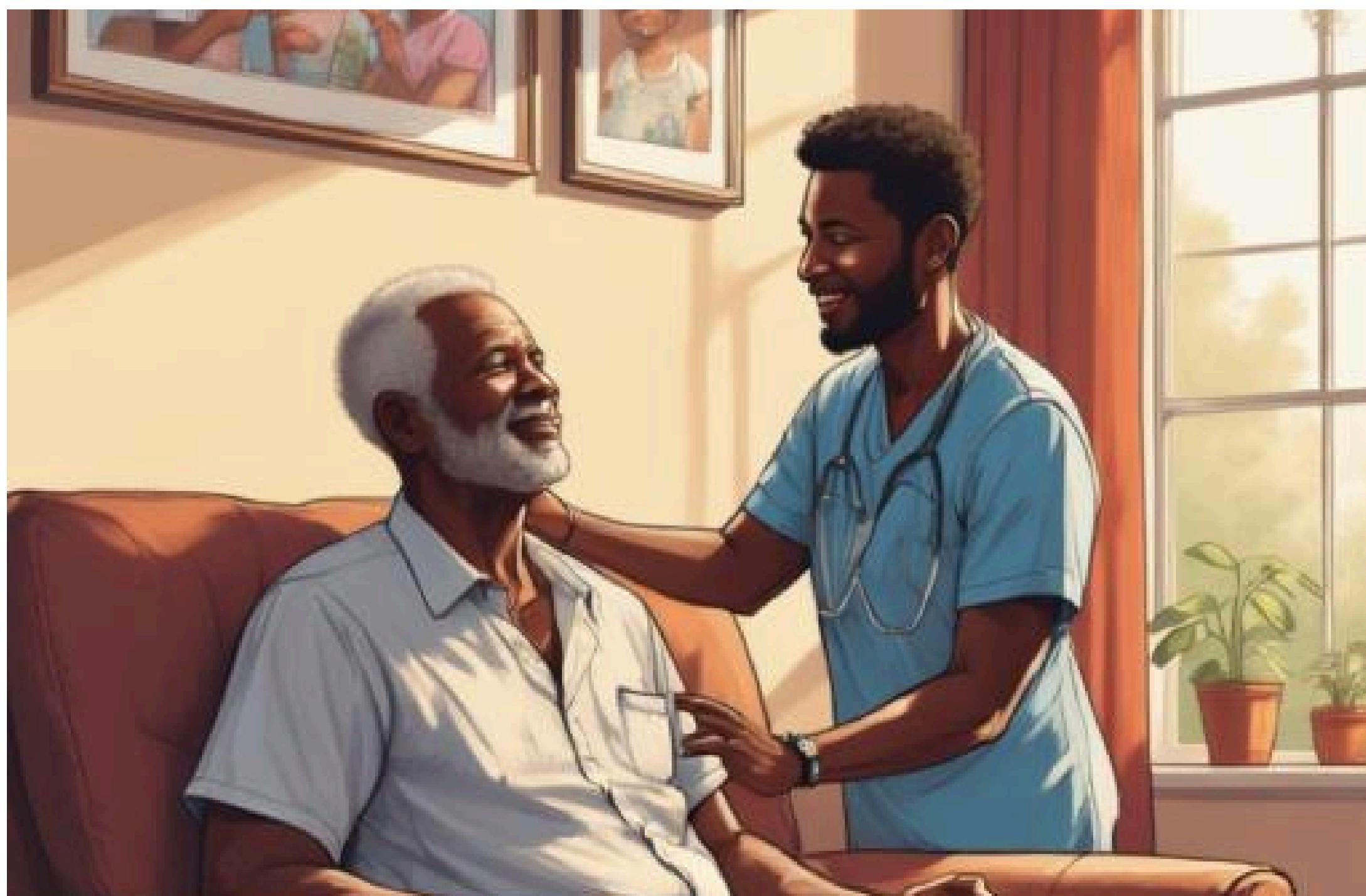
The survivor may suddenly burst into tears or laugh loudly for no reason. This is often **not** true sadness or joy; it is a "short circuit" in the brain. Do not be offended; wait for it to pass calmly.

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.

