

Leisure activities after stroke

Stroke Support Helpline: 0303 3033 100
or email: helpline@stroke.org.uk

Ideas for enjoyable leisure time and suggestions for accessible activities after a stroke.

Our leisure time is valuable and taking part in hobbies and interests is an important part of life after stroke. Doing something you love for fun, relaxation or learning can help you to feel good and enjoy life.

Getting involved in a leisure activity can also be rewarding in many ways. It can raise your confidence, improve anxiety or low mood, or help you to get fit. It can also help your recovery by giving you enjoyable time communicating, thinking and learning, or being physically active. Joining in social activities with others can also help with your wellbeing.

Can I do my usual activities?

You might be able to go back to an old interest. But it can sometimes be difficult to return to a favourite hobby because of the effects of stroke. If that's the case for you, it might be possible to adapt an activity so you can take part. That could mean learning to do something in a different way. An occupational therapist might be able to help you find ways to return to your hobbies.

There might be a practical solution, such as using some technology or equipment. Or you might be able to do your activity with support from another person, such as having a partner for country walking if you find it difficult on your own. Many organisations can offer adapted and inclusive activities for people with health conditions or disabilities.

You might find you can take up an activity after making more progress with your recovery. If you need help finding support with your recovery, contact our Stroke Support Helpline.

Finding new interests

If you are not able to return to your previous hobbies, think about your interests and abilities. Are there any new activities you can try that might suit you? Get your friends and family involved. They might come up with ideas you had not thought of.

This guide gives some ideas to get you thinking, but there are also other organisations with expertise in inclusive leisure. There may also be local groups that you can join. You might need to try a few different things before you find the right fit.

Trying physical activities

Starting a physical activity can help your fitness and wellbeing. If you're new to physical activity and movement, start slowly and build up. Like any other leisure activity, you might need to try a few things before you find something you love.

Some areas have local exercise referral schemes for people with certain health conditions who want to start being more active. This can let you try out an exercise group or gym, often at a local leisure centre, either for free or at a reduced cost. There are inclusive versions of many types of sport. For more information, search online or ask your GP surgery if there are schemes in your area.

Physical activity is generally safe and can help you feel good. The only exceptions are if you have very high blood pressure, or a health condition that might risk you getting ill or injured if you exercise. If you're not sure or have not exercised for some time, always check with your GP first before starting exercise.

Visit stroke.org.uk/getting-active for more information and videos on being active after a stroke. You can also call our Stroke Support Helpline for a printed copy of our 'Getting active after a stroke' guide.

Looking for ways to spend your leisure time?

Here are some suggestions:

- **Animals** – keeping a pet, birdwatching, visiting wildlife reserves.
- **Art and crafts** – drawing, painting, pottery, making models or cards.
- **Cinema or theatre** – some have regular clubs, or accessible shows such as audio-described or subtitled films.
- **Cooking** – trying new recipes, baking, learning about healthy eating. Watch cooking videos made by stroke survivors at youtube.com/MyStrokeGuide
- **Days out** – visiting art galleries, museums or historic buildings.
- **Gardening** – indoor plants, flower shows, growing vegetables at an allotment.
- **Music** – listening to music, playing an instrument or going to concerts.
- **Photography** – taking photos or visiting exhibitions. There may be a local photography club in your area.
- **Puzzles and games** – jigsaws, crosswords, sudoku, board games or computer games.
- **Reading** – books, newspapers or magazines. Many are available in accessible formats such as large print, braille or audio.
- **Needlecraft** – patchwork, knitting, embroidery or tapestry.
- **Sport and physical activity** – watching or taking part. See 'Other sources of help and information' later in this guide for tips on finding sports organisations which support people with health conditions and disabilities.
- **Walking** – a great, free way to get active and see new things. Local walking clubs often organise walks to suit all abilities.
- **Writing** – letters, stories, or poetry, or writing to a pen friend.

How can I find out more?

Stroke Support Groups

Stroke Support Groups offer support to stroke survivors and their families. They are usually led by volunteers, often stroke survivors or carers themselves. They meet regularly, usually in local community venues. Some meet online via video meetings.

Groups provide you with a safe space to feel listened to and understood. You can ask questions, share recovery tips, and learn from each other to find new ways of doing things.

Each group is different, but many offer activities. This may include everything from speakers, outings or art classes, through to communication and exercise sessions. There are groups all over the UK. To find your nearest one, call our Stroke Support Helpline on **0303 3033 100** or visit stroke.org.uk/finding-support/stroke-support-groups

Online activities

The Stroke Association offers regular, free online activities sessions, run by our friendly staff or volunteers. They're a great way to meet new people from your own home. You can learn about the effects of stroke, share experiences or take part in exercise groups, social quizzes or other activities. Stroke survivors tell us they understand more about stroke and feel more confident after joining these sessions.

Find out more and sign up at stroke.org.uk/stroke/support/online-activities

Online community

We also have a vibrant online community at onlinecommunity.stroke.org.uk where you can connect with thousands of people who understand stroke first-hand and can relate to your recovery. You can post about things important to you, ask questions and share your own experiences.

Stroke News magazine

Stroke News is our magazine for everyone affected by stroke, produced three times a year. The magazine offers a wealth of valuable information, including personal stories from stroke survivors and their families. Stroke News is available in print, audio and on our website.

To subscribe in print or audio, call **0300 3300 740**, email strokenews@stroke.org.uk or visit stroke.org.uk/stroke-news-magazine

Go online

Search for websites, blogs and social media sites where you can read about leisure activities for people with health conditions and disabilities. See the 'Other sources of help and information' section at the end of this guide for some ideas.

Visit stroke.org.uk/getting-online for practical tips on getting online if you have aphasia.

Things you can try near you

Visit your local library

They may have details about local clubs and events. Libraries also often stock books in large print and on CD. Many also offer computers with internet access, audio books, eBooks and online newspapers. Visit gov.uk/local-library-services to find your nearest council-run library.

Contact your local council

Your local council has details of day centres and other clubs near you. Many councils have this information on their website.

Try learning something new

Many areas offer adult learning, either at a college, museum or library. You can try courses in arts and crafts, technology, music, exercise and many more. You can also find courses run by a business or individual, such as dressmaking or pottery at a local craft centre. Contact the centre for details of courses. Although you will usually have to pay for these courses, some centres offer concessions if you are disabled or on certain benefits.

Visit your local leisure centre

Some local sports centres and swimming pools offer discounted membership or specialist classes for people with disabilities. You may be able to find a tailored exercise programme for people with health conditions. Or your GP may be able to refer you to group fitness sessions with a specialist coach. Other activities like diabetes education groups take place at leisure centres.

Leisure centres sometimes offer movement and relaxation activities like yoga, Zumba or meditation. These can be a good way to get moving after a stroke, help you feel good and improve your mood.

Leisure centres should be accessible for people with disabilities. They may offer accessible gym or pool equipment and sessions for people with disabilities.

Where to get help and information

From the Stroke Association

Talk to us

Our Stroke Support Helpline is for anyone affected by a stroke, including family, friends and carers. The Stroke Support Helpline can give you information and support on any aspect of stroke.

Call us on **0303 3033 100**, from a textphone **18001 0303 3033 100** or email helpline@stroke.org.uk

Read our information

Log onto stroke.org.uk where you can find easy-to-understand information, videos and an online community to support you. You can also call the Stroke Support Helpline to ask for printed copies of our guides.

Other sources of help and information

This list includes a range of national and local groups. For more ideas and information, search online.

Arts and crafts

Disability Arts Online

Website: disabilityartsonline.org.uk
Article and blogs about disability and art. Has a directory of organisations that specialise in disability arts including theatre, creative writing and painting.

Lowery Workstands

Website: workstands.com
Tel: **01652 628 240**
Needlecraft supplies like specialist tapestry frames and embroidery rings.

Days out

If you're planning a day out, contact the venue first or look at their website. They can tell you about accessibility, and any concessions you and a carer may be entitled to.

English Heritage

Website: english-heritage.org.uk
Historic sites and events throughout England.

National Trust

Website: nationaltrust.org.uk
Tel: **0844 800 1895**
Email: enquiries@nationaltrust.org.uk
Information about places to visit and things to do across the UK, with details on accessibility at each venue.

Rough Guide to Accessible Britain

Website: [motability.co.uk/news-and-events/rough-guide-to-accessible-britain](https://www.motability.co.uk/news-and-events/rough-guide-to-accessible-britain)
Online guide for people with disabilities, with over 200 ideas for days out. Includes accessibility information, as well as reviews and tips from disabled visitors.

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)

Website: [rspb.org.uk](https://www.rspb.org.uk)
Tel: **01767 680 551**
Their website has information about all their UK nature reserves, including accessible facilities.

Wildlife Trusts

Website: [wildlifetrusts.org/accessible-nature-reserves](https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/accessible-nature-reserves)
List of accessible UK Wildlife Trust sites, where you can visit woodland, wetlands and other habitats to see wild birds, insects and plants.

Sports and outdoor activities

Calvert Lakes

Website: [calvertlakes.org.uk](https://www.calvertlakes.org.uk)
Offers accessible outdoor activities for people with disabilities in the Lake District.

Every Body Moves

Website: [everybodymoves.org.uk](https://www.everybodymoves.org.uk)
Has a postcode search tool to find inclusive sports, clubs and activities near you.

Sailability

Website: [rya.org.uk/gbni/ryani/go-boating/sailability](https://www.rya.org.uk/gbni/ryani/go-boating/sailability)
Tel: **023 8060 4100**
Sites around the UK where people of all ages with disabilities can try sailing.

Gardening

Gardening with Disabilities Trust

Website: [gardeningwithdisabilitiestrust.org.uk](https://www.gardeningwithdisabilitiestrust.org.uk)
Email: info@gardeningwithdisabilitiestrust.org.uk
Provides information and advice for disabled gardeners. They also have a grant scheme to help people with disabilities continue gardening.

Thrive

Website: [thrive.org.uk](https://www.thrive.org.uk)
Tel: **0118 988 5688**
Email: info@thrive.org.uk
Helps older and disabled people to continue gardening. The website also has tips for new gardeners and ideas on making your garden more accessible.

Music

Drake Music

Website: [drakemusic.org](https://www.drakemusic.org)
National arts charity which uses technology to support disabled people to make music.

Photography

Disabled Photographers' Society

Website: [the-dps.co.uk](https://www.the-dps.co.uk)
Email: enquiries@the-dps.co.uk
Promotes photography for people with disabilities. The website has a discussion forum and information about helpful accessories. They also have an adaptations coordinator who can advise on equipment.

Puzzles and games

Partially Sighted Society

Website: [partsight.org.uk](https://www.partsight.org.uk)
Tel: **01302 965 195**
Email: reception@partsight.org.uk
Sells a range of products including large print crossword books and playing cards, card holders and jigsaws with pieces twice the usual size.

Reading

Calibre audio library

Website: [calibre.org.uk](https://www.calibre.org.uk)
Tel: **01296 432 339**
Email: enquiries@calibre.org.uk
Lending library of audio books. Members can stream or download audio books or request a memory stick in the post.

InterAct Stroke Support

Website: [interactstrokesupport.org](https://www.interactstrokesupport.org)
Tel: **0203 886 1028**
Charity which provides trained actors to read to stroke survivors in hospital, at stroke clubs or at home via phone or video calls.

Listening Books

Website: [listening-books.org.uk](https://www.listening-books.org.uk)
Tel: **020 7407 9417**
Email: info@listening-books.org.uk
Audio library service providing audio books, magazines and newspapers.

Playback Recording Service

Website: [play-back.com](https://www.play-back.com)
Tel: **0141 776 3395**
Provides a free service transcribing text to audio for people with visual problems. Also has a large library of publications in audio format.

Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)

Website: [rnib.org.uk](https://www.rnib.org.uk)
Helpline: **0303 123 9999**
Email: helpline@rnib.org.uk
The RNIB Library gives people with vision problems access to audio, braille and music resources. Their Talking Books service offers audiobooks on CD, USB and by digital download. You can also subscribe to RNIB Newsagent, which offers newspapers and magazines in a variety of audio formats. The RNIB shop also sells large print puzzle books.

Cinema and theatre

Accessible Screenings

Website: [accessiblescreeningsuk.co.uk](https://www.accessiblescreeningsuk.co.uk)
Search tool to find cinemas showing accessible films with audio descriptions, subtitles, or autism and dementia-friendly screenings.

Official London Theatre

Website: [officiallondontheatre.co.uk](https://www.officiallondontheatre.co.uk)
Website listing theatre shows in London, with accessible venue and performance information.

Radio

RAIBC

Website: [raibc.org.uk](https://www.raibc.org.uk)
Helpline: **0800 028 8660**
A group for people with disabilities who are interested in amateur radio. They can lend equipment to members.

About our information

We want to provide the best information for people affected by stroke. That's why we ask stroke survivors and their families, as well as medical experts, to help us put our publications together.

How did we do?

To tell us what you think of this guide, or to request a list of the sources we used to create it, email us at **feedback@stroke.org.uk**

Accessible formats

Visit our website if you need this information in audio, large print or braille.

Always get individual advice

This guide contains general information about stroke. But if you have a problem, you should get individual advice from a professional such as a GP or pharmacist. Our Helpline can also help you find support. We work very hard to give you the latest facts, but some things change. We don't control the information provided by other organisations or websites.

You know more than most just how shocking and confusing having a stroke is. We're here to support you and your family find the strength and determination to get back to life.

Learn more about stroke support: **stroke.org.uk**

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