

Equipment for independent living and mobility

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



Read this online

Information about the types of equipment and technology you can use to help you with daily life after a stroke.

After a stroke, daily tasks such as getting around, cooking and bathing may be more difficult than before. Many people benefit from using equipment to help them with tasks. This could include specialist products or technology.

What types of equipment are available?

There's a huge range of equipment available to make everyday life easier. Some examples are:

- **Bathroom aids** – these include:
 - Grab rails to help you get in and out of the shower or bath.
 - Non-slip mats to help stop you slipping in the shower or bath.
 - Bath and shower seats so you can sit down while bathing.
 - Raised toilet seats and commodes to make going to the loo easier.
- **Dressing aids** – these include:
 - Hooks to help you fasten buttons with one hand or pull on clothes.
 - Gadgets to pull up socks, tights and underpants.
- **Furniture** – including electric beds to help you sit up and electric chairs to help you stand up.
- **Kitchen aids** – these include:
 - Easy-to-use tin openers if you have hand weakness.
 - Kettle tippers to help you pour water without lifting the kettle.
 - Non-slip mats to stop spills while preparing food or eating.
 - Cutlery with large handles for easy grip.
- **Mobility aids** – including walking sticks and frames, wheelchairs, electric scooters and stair lifts to help you move around.
- **Making life at home safer** – this includes:
 - Grab rails for inside and outside your home, to help you avoid falls.
 - Monitoring systems, also known as telecare systems, use sensors around your home to detect different activities. They can alert a monitoring centre or your family/carers to problems, such as unusual movement or temperature changes.
- **Personal alarms** – these enable you to call for help easily if you fall or become ill when you're alone. See page 3.

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- **Telephones** – landlines are available with large buttons and displays.
- **Mobile phones and tablets** – many have accessibility features like voice-activated internet searches. AbilityNet has step-by-step guides about using these features. See page 3. You can also download apps to do things like read text aloud or set reminders.
- **Digital assistants or smart speakers** – voice-operated smart home devices include Amazon Echo and Google Nest. You can use your voice to ask these devices to search the internet, set alarms and play music. They can also be used alongside other smart devices to operate home appliances and do tasks like turning on lights and opening curtains.
- **Smart doorbells** – these connect a video camera at your door with your mobile phone, so you can use an app to see and talk to any doorstep callers.

Help with choosing equipment

If you need support at home after a stroke, contact your local council's adult social services department (or health and social care trust in Northern Ireland). They can arrange a care needs assessment.

An occupational therapist or social worker usually does this assessment at your home. They will look at whether you need any equipment or adaptations in your home, as well as support with care needs. You might also be referred for a separate home assessment.

If you need equipment or minor adaptations like a grab rail, you should get this free through your council, up to the value of £1,000. If the hospital gave you any equipment to use on your return home, this should also be free.

A council can charge for adaptations costing more than £1,000. You may be able to apply for a grant towards the cost. Councils in England, Wales and Northern Ireland offer Disabled Facilities Grants to help towards home adaptations like stairlifts. In Scotland, ask your local council about housing adaptations grants.

The charity Independence at Home provides grants for equipment and home adaptations for people who cannot afford to pay for them. Visit independenceathome.org.uk to find out more.

Buying or hiring equipment

If you're buying equipment, it's worth contacting a few different suppliers to get the best price. If you have a disability or serious long-term health condition, you may not have to pay VAT (tax) on certain equipment. The retailer may ask you to complete a form to confirm you're eligible. Visit gov.uk/financial-help-disabled/vat-relief for more information.

Some suppliers may let you try things before you buy them, or you may be able to hire equipment if you only need it for a short time. The Red Cross hires out wheelchairs. Visit redcross.org.uk or call **0300 456 1914**.

Living Made Easy has resources to help you choose equipment and find where you can buy it. See page 3.

Independent living centres and disabled living centres also provide advice on aids and equipment, with products on show to try out.

Personal alarms

Personal alarm systems (sometimes called community alarms) can help you stay safe at home. They usually link an alarm system to your phone and have a pendant with a button worn around your wrist or neck. In an emergency, you can press the button to call for help. Some can send automatic alerts if you fall, or can use GPS tracking technology to protect you outside your home.

Your local council may be able to provide an alarm but you might have to pay for the service. You can also get one from a private provider. The consumer website **which.co.uk** has information on different types of alarm and providers.

Where to get help and information

From the Stroke Association

Stroke Support Helpline

Our Stroke Support Helpline offers information and support for anyone affected by a stroke. This includes family, friends and carers.

Call us on **0303 3033 100**,
from a textphone **18001 0303 3033 100**
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

Advice about equipment

AbilityNet

Website: **abilitynet.org.uk**

Tel: **0300 180 0028**

Helps older and disabled people access and use digital technology.

Living Made Easy

Website: **livingmadeeasy.org.uk**

Helpline: **0300 999 0004**

Website lists different equipment and where to buy it.

Research Institute for Disabled Consumers (RiDC)

Website: **ridc.org.uk**

Tel: **020 7427 2460**

Produces consumer guides to help you choose equipment and find suppliers.

Product suppliers

Able2Wear Ltd

Website: **able2wear.co.uk**

Tel: **0141 775 3738**

Specialist clothing for people with disabilities.

Essential Aids

Website: **essentialaids.com**

Tel: **01273 719 889**

Provides a range of equipment for inside and outside the home.

OT Stores

Website: **otstores.co.uk**

Tel: **0845 260 7061**

Supplies daily living, occupational therapy and physiotherapy aids.

Equipment for independent living and mobility

Performance Health

Website: performancehealth.co.uk

Tel: **03448 730 035**

Offers a range of medical and rehabilitation equipment.

Remap

Website: remap.org.uk

Tel: **01732 760 209**

Charity that makes or adapts equipment for people with disabilities.

Personal and community alarms

Careline365

Website: careline.co.uk

Tel: **0808 258 2538**

A national provider of personal alarms.

You can use the code 'SA15' to save £15 on an alarm.

Telecare Services Association

Website: tsa-voice.org.uk

Tel: **01625 520 320**

Lists suppliers of alarms across the UK.

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 Stroke Support 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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