

CHAPTER 4—AFTER THE HOSPITAL

Not everyone will be ready to return home post-stroke. Be thoughtful and talk with your medical and rehab care teams to determine the best living environment for your loved one. These decisions will depend on finances as well as the stroke survivor's needs that may change during recovery.



There are a variety of options for daily care. If you and your loved one haven't discussed this yet, you will need to decide the best place for the stroke survivor to continue care.

DAILY CARE OPTIONS

Adult Day Services Structured, supervised day programs that provide nonmedical care and social services, as well as recreational and educational activities.

Assisted Living Facilities Residential communities where a stroke survivor can live independently. They often coordinate health services for residents and provide assistance with activities of daily living such as bathing, dressing and grooming. These facilities differ from nursing homes because they do not provide medical services.

Home Healthcare/Professional Caregivers Nurses, social workers, physical therapists, occupational therapists and other professionals can be prescribed to do home visits.

Live-In Family Caregiver A stroke survivor may prefer to live in his/her home with a family member or a family member's home to assist with recovery.

Nursing Homes Residential facilities that provide acute medical care and therapy for stroke survivors who are currently unable to live independently.

Take the stroke survivor's needs and finances into account when making these decisions.

Support groups may be beneficial for you and your loved one as you navigate through the recovery journey. Groups can help you connect with other stroke survivors and caregivers as well as share advice, resources and tips. Visit National Stroke Association's Stroke Support Group Registry at www.stroke.org/supportgroups to find a group near you.

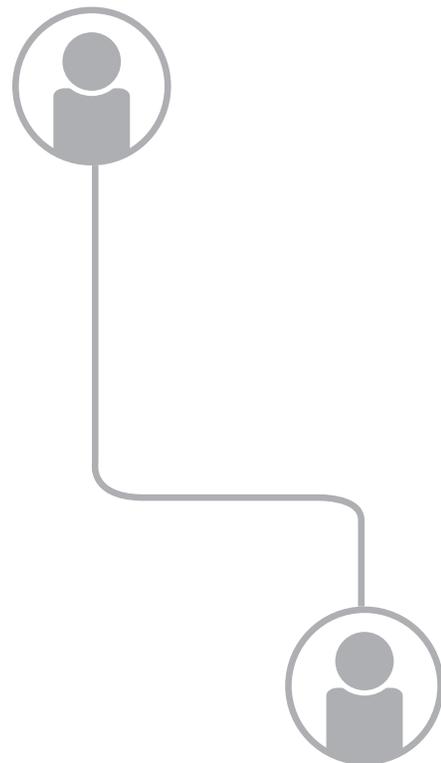
OUTPATIENT SERVICES

When preparing for outpatient services, talk with the stroke survivor's medical and rehab care team members (physicians, nurses, stroke coordinators and/or social workers). They can connect you with discharge information, prescriptions for medications and home care. They can also provide you with information about rehab and companion caregiving services.

Easter Seals Disability Services is a national organization with more than 500 centers throughout the country. Find a location near you at www.easterseals.com. Easter Seals locations may offer rehab services, information about local resources and may be able to make appropriate referrals.

It is very important that you schedule all follow-up appointments as soon as possible. Appointments may include but are not limited to:

- Primary care provider.
- Neurologist.
- Cardiologist.
- Physical therapist.
- Occupational therapist.
- Speech therapist.
- Social worker.



Searching for a healthcare professional in your area can be frustrating. However, resources are available to assist you in choosing a healthcare professional that meets your needs. The American Medical Association has a database of member physicians at www.ama-assn.org. Find a physician in your area with the DoctorFinder application. The website, www.ratemd.com allows you to search for professionals in your area and view reviews on their knowledge, experience, punctuality and helpfulness. In addition, consult with the stroke survivor's health insurance company; companies often have registries of local physicians in the stroke survivor's network.

It is important to know how to appropriately assist the stroke survivor; ask your medical and rehab care team members to demonstrate how to move the stroke survivor, administer treatments/medications and follow the recovery plan.

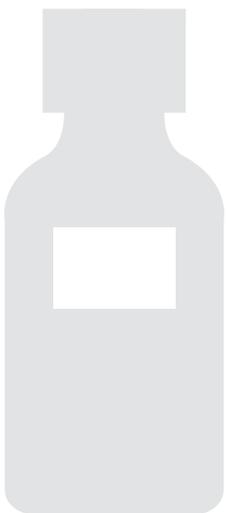
Your medical and rehab care teams may change after discharge from the hospital. Refer to Chapters 2 and 3 to help you plan your loved one's care.

MEDICATIONS

Before leaving your healthcare professional's office or the hospital, make sure to get all prescriptions and have a clear understanding of what each medication/prescription is for. The average stroke survivor is prescribed 11 different medications. These medications may be prescribed to manage pre-existing conditions prior to the stroke, to prevent another stroke or to manage new post-stroke conditions such as depression, chronic pain or seizures.

Ask your pharmacist about food or medication interactions, including herbs and vitamins, and how to administer medication (e.g., time of day, before or after meals). You may want to ask a variety of questions. Refer to page 40 for a list of recommended questions to ask your pharmacist and/or healthcare professional.

Many insurance companies recommend filling prescriptions by mail and for three months at a time. In the beginning, try to fill prescriptions monthly because medications and dosage may change. Prescriptions can be filled in many ways. Talk to your pharmacist about your options and choose what will work best for you and your loved one.



To help you track your loved one's medications, check out our Medication Tracker Template in Appendix E.