

# Emotional Wellbeing after a stroke

## What to expect and where to seek help



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### The facts

It is common to experience a range of emotions after a stroke. You might have feelings of disbelief, anger, sadness, or worry.

This is understandable and a common reaction to a sudden event. For some people these feelings will come and go quickly. For others they may last a little longer and may begin to affect your emotional health. Around half of all stroke survivors will suffer from depression at some point in the first year after a stroke. If left untreated it can:

- Affect your energy and motivation
- Make you feel unwilling to take part in rehabilitation
- Impact on your family relationships
- Affect your long term recovery

Help is available, so being able to notice these emotions and know where to get support is very important.

### Being in hospital

In the very early days after having a stroke, the way you think and communicate may change. It can be hard to make sense of your emotions or talk to those close to you about how you are feeling. The staff that are looking after you will make sure that there is time to talk and ask questions about any emotional changes you have noticed since your stroke. They will ask you about possible signs of depression such as:

- Feeling down
- Feeling less interested in life
- Finding it hard to think about the future

They might also ask about other changes in personality or behaviour since the stroke, such as feeling more emotional. This can be another symptom of stroke, linked with changes to the parts of the brain involved in controlling emotion. Where you are noticing problems they may refer you to a specialist in emotional health to get information on treatment options open to you.

### Rehabilitation and getting home

Rehabilitation in hospital will be aimed at helping you meet your personal goals. You will have regular opportunities to talk about your progress. It is very normal in these early stages to feel tired and you might feel worried about the future and any changes to lifestyle that have been advised because of your stroke. If needed, your Consultant or GP can prescribe medication to relieve the symptoms of depression and worry, or refer you to a service called First Step which offers talking based therapies.



Your local Stroke Association advisor can also offer advice and support to you and your family as you move from the ward to home. The Stroke Association can provide advice and support to individuals and carers across the north west.

For many people, getting home is a very important early achievement. This paves the way for on-going success as your rehabilitation continues at home. However for some people going home can mean becoming more aware of changes that may have happened in memory, communication or problem solving skills. It may be useful for you to be referred to a specialist psychologist, who can suggest treatments for depression which are adapted for people who have had a stroke. Seeing other members of the team; occupational therapists, speech and language therapists and physiotherapists can also help with low mood. They can work with you to look at how you cope with different tasks. They will also talk to you about working towards goals like returning to family routines, work or leisure interests, which can also boost mood.

If you are having problems with getting frustrated or angry as a result of changes following a stroke, the psychologist may be able to give you advice about managing this. If you would like to talk more about emotional health and any impact that this is having on your rehabilitation and recovery, you can contact:

- Your GP for advice on medication and services like First Step
- visit [www.stroke.org.uk](http://www.stroke.org.uk)

Contact the Clinical Health & Rehabilitation Psychology Service on 01946 523666

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## Feedback

We appreciate and encourage feedback, which helps us to improve our services. If you have any comments, compliments or complaints to make about your care, please contact the Patient Experience Team.

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