



CARE INSTRUCTIONS

KAISER PERMANENTE

Stroke

Your Kaiser Permanente Care Instructions

You have had a stroke. This means that the blood flow to a part of your brain was blocked for some time, which damages the nerve cells in that part of the brain. The part of your body controlled by that part of your brain may not function properly now. A stroke is also sometimes called a cerebral vascular accident, or CVA.

The brain is an amazing organ that can heal itself to some degree. The stroke you had damaged part of your brain, but other parts of your brain may take over in some way for the damaged areas. You have already started this process.

Going home may be hard for you and your family. The more you can try to do for yourself, the better. Remember to take each day one at a time.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- Enter a stroke rehabilitation (rehab) program, if your doctor or other clinician recommends it. Physical, speech, and occupational therapies can help you manage bathing, dressing, eating, and other basics of daily living. Talk with a nurse or physical therapist about tools that can help you get dressed, balance and walk, bathe, eat, and even communicate better.
- Eat a heart-healthy diet that is low in cholesterol, saturated fat, and salt. Eat lots of fresh fruits and vegetables and foods high in fiber.
- Increase your activities slowly. Take short rest breaks when you get tired. Gradually increase the amount you walk. Start out by walking a little more than you did the day before.
- Do not drive until your doctor or other clinician says it is okay.
- It is normal to feel sad or depressed after a stroke. If the “blues” last, talk to your doctor or other clinician.
- If you are having problems with urine leakage, go to the bathroom at regular times, including when you first wake up and at bedtime. Also, limit fluids after dinner.

Stroke (page 2)

- If you are constipated, drink extra fluids throughout the day. Set up a regular time for using the toilet. If you continue to have constipation, your doctor or other clinician may suggest using a bulking agent, such as Metamucil, or a stool softener, laxative, or enema.

Medicines

- Take your medicines exactly as prescribed. Call your doctor or other clinician if you think you are having a problem with your medicine. We need to speak with you to decide together the next steps in finding the best solution for you. You may be taking several medicines. ACE (angiotensin-converting enzyme) inhibitors, beta-blockers, diuretics (water pills), and calcium channel blockers control your blood pressure. Statins help lower cholesterol. Your doctor or other clinician may also prescribe medicines for depression, pain, sleep problems, anxiety, or agitation.
- If your doctor or other clinician has given you medicine that prevents blood clots (warfarin [Coumadin], aspirin with dipyridamole [Aggrenox], clopidogrel [Plavix], ticlopidine [Ticlid], or aspirin) to prevent a stroke, you should:
 - Tell your dentist, pharmacist, and other health professionals that you take these medicines.
 - Watch for unusual bruising or bleeding, such as blood in your urine, red or black stools, or bleeding from your nose or gums.
 - Get regular blood tests to check your clotting time if you are taking Coumadin.
 - Wear a medical alert ID bracelet. You can buy this at most drugstores.
- Call your doctor or other clinician if you are not able to take your medicines for any reason. Do not take any over-the-counter medicine or herbal products without talking to your doctor or other clinician first.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. As a partner in your health care, you can do things like keep all scheduled visits, be sure you know the results of all tests and labs ordered as part of your care, and keep an up-to-date personal list of the medicines you are taking. Know how to contact us between visits, and call your doctor or other clinician if you have signs that you are having problems.

For family members and caregivers

- Make your home safe for your loved one who has had a stroke. Set up a room so that your loved one does not have to climb stairs. Be sure the bathroom is on the same floor. Move throw rugs

Stroke (page 3)

and furniture that could cause falls, and make sure that the lighting is good. Put grab bars and seats in tubs and showers.

- Find out what your loved one can do and what he or she needs help with. Try not to do things for your loved one that your loved one can do on his or her own. Help him or her learn and practice new skills.
- Visit and talk with your loved one often. Play cards together, or watch TV. Keep in touch with your loved one's friends as much as you can, and encourage them to visit.
- Take care of yourself. Do not try to do everything yourself. Ask other family members to help. Eat well, get enough rest, and take time to do things that you enjoy. Keep up with your own doctor visits, and make sure to take your medicines regularly. Get out of the house as much as you can. Join a local support group. Find out if you qualify for home health care visits to help with rehab or for adult day care.

When should you call 911?

If you think you are experiencing a medical emergency, call 911 immediately or seek other emergency services. Examples of symptoms that may be an emergency include:

- You have sudden numbness, paralysis, or weakness in your face, arm, or leg, especially on only one side of your body.
- You feel severe dizziness, clumsiness, or problems walking.
- You have any sudden changes in vision.
- You have new problems speaking or understanding simple statements, or you feel confused.
- You have a sudden, severe headache that is different from past headaches.
- You feel like you are having another stroke.

Call 911 even if these symptoms go away in a few minutes.

When should you call Kaiser Permanente?

- Your stools are black and tarlike or have streaks of blood.
- You have bleeding from your nose or gums.
- You have blood in your urine.

Stroke (page 4)

- You have severe vaginal bleeding. Soaking one pad or tampon an hour for 2 or more hours is too much bleeding.
- You have frequent, severe bruising or tiny red or purple spots on your skin.
- You have new symptoms that may be related to your stroke, such as falls or trouble swallowing.

How can you learn more about stroke?

- *Log on:* members.kp.org. Search for **stroke** in the **Health encyclopedia**.
- *Look in:* Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook.
- *Listen to:* Kaiser Permanente Healthphone: 1-800-332-7563. For a list of topics, go to members.kp.org and search for **healthphone**.

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