

Leisure activities after stroke

Stroke 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 different ways. It can raise your confidence, improve anxiety or low mood, and help you to get fit. It can also help your recovery by giving you enjoyable time communicating, thinking and learning, or being physically active.

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 an old hobby because of the effects of stroke. If that's the case for you, it might be possible to adapt an activity so that 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 old hobbies.

There might be a practical solution such as using some technology or equipment. Or you might be able to do your activity with help from another person, such as having a partner for country walking if you find it difficult to go on your own.

You might find that you can take up an activity after making more progress with your recovery. For suggestions on getting the therapy you need, including accessing private therapy, contact our 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 out that might suit you? Get your friends and family involved in helping you find new hobbies and activities. They know you well and might come up with something you haven't thought of.

This guide gives some ideas to get you thinking, but there are also other organisations with expertise in accessible leisure activities. 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.

You may be able to access a local exercise referral scheme. This can let you try out an exercise group or gym, often at your local leisure centre. There are inclusive versions of many types of sport. For more information, search online.

Exercise is safe and can help you feel good. The only exception is if you have very high blood pressure, or a health condition that might risk you getting ill or injured if you take exercise. If you're not sure, always check with your GP first.

Visit stroke.org.uk/getting-active for more information on being active after a stroke.

Looking for ways to spend your leisure time?

Here are some suggestions:

- **Animals** – keeping a pet, birdwatching.
- **Art and crafts** – drawing, painting, pottery, making models or cards.
- **Cinema or theatre** – some have special events or clubs.
- **Cooking** – trying new recipes, baking, learning about healthy eating.
- **Days out** – visiting art galleries, museums, or historic buildings.
- **Gardening** – indoor plants, flower shows, growing vegetables.
- **Music** – listening to music, playing an instrument, or going to concerts.
- **Photography** – taking photos or visiting exhibitions.
- **Puzzles and games** – jigsaws, crosswords, sudoku, playing board games or computer games.
- **Reading** – books, newspapers, or magazines (these may be available in different formats such as large print or audio).
- **Needlecraft** – patchwork, knitting, embroidery or tapestry.
- **Sport and physical activity** – watching or taking part.
- **Walking** – a great way to get active and see new things, whether it's in the countryside or city.
- **Writing** – letters, stories, or poetry, writing to a pen friend.

How can I find out more?

Stroke clubs and groups

Stroke clubs and groups offer support to stroke survivors and their families. They are usually led by volunteers, often stroke survivors and carers themselves, and meet regularly, usually in local halls or community centres.

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

My Stroke Guide

If you want to try a new hobby or return to an old one, try talking to other stroke survivors to get some advice.

My Stroke Guide is the free online stroke support tool from the Stroke Association. Log on to find easy-to-read information, practical tips and videos about stroke. Our chat forums can connect you to our online community to hear how others manage their recovery. Log on at **mystrokeguide.com**.

Stroke News magazine

Stroke News is our magazine for everyone affected by stroke, produced three times a year. It's full of stories and personal advice from stroke survivors and carers, and it also includes emotional and practical guidance on coping with life after stroke. Stroke News is available as an audio recording, as well as in print and online.

To subscribe, call **01604 687 721** or email **strokenews@stroke.org.uk**.

Go online

Search for websites, blogs and social media sites where you can read about leisure activities for people with health problems and disabilities. You could sign up for a newsletter or join a Facebook group to get updates and tips shared by professionals and people with disabilities.

Visit **stroke.org.uk/getting-online** for practical tips for people with aphasia.

Things you can try near you

Visit your local library

They may have details of local clubs and events. Look out for leaflets and posters. They also often stock books in large print and on CD, and many offer audio books, eBooks and eJournals.

Contact your local council

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

Try learning something new

Many areas offer adult learning, either at a local authority adult education centre or a 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 on offer. 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 group fitness sessions with a specialist coach that your GP can refer you to. Other activities like diabetes education groups take place at leisure centres.

Some movement and relaxation activities like yoga, Zumba or meditation are often available at leisure centres. These can be a good way to get moving after a stroke. They can also help you feel good and improve your mood.

Leisure centres should be accessible for people with disabilities. This can include help to use the swimming pool such as a hoist. They may offer accessible gym equipment and sessions for people with disabilities.

Where to get help and information

From the Stroke Association

Talk to us

Our Stroke Helpline is for anyone affected by a stroke, including family, friends and carers. The 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**.

Visit our website

We have information about all aspects of stroke, including reducing your risk of a stroke and rehabilitation. Read online at **stroke.org.uk** or call the Helpline to ask for printed copies.

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

Conquest Art

Website: **conquestart.org**

Tel: **020 3044 2731**

Email: **enquiries@conquestart.org**

Runs art groups for people with disabilities in Surrey, Merseyside, Worcestershire and Suffolk.

Disability Arts Online

Website: **disabilityartsonline.org.uk**

An online resource with articles 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**

Email: **services@workstands.com**

Needlecraft supplies like specialist tapestry frames and embroidery rings.

Outdoor activities and days out

If you are planning a day out, contact the venue first. They can tell you about accessibility and any concessions you and a carer may be able to receive.

Sailability

Website: **rya.org.uk/sailability**

Tel: **02380 604 100**

There are Sailability sites around the UK where people with disabilities can try sailing. It's open to people of all ages and types of disability.

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)

Website: rspb.org.uk

Tel: 01767 680 551

Their website has information about all the nature reserves in the UK including how accessible they are.

Wildlife Trusts

Website: wildlifetrusts.org/accessible-nature-reserves

List of accessible Wildlife Trust sites where you can visit woodland, wetlands and other habitats to see wild birds, insects and plants.

English Heritage

Website: english-heritage.org.uk

Tel: 0370 333 1181

Has details of historic sites and events throughout England.

The National Trust

Website: nationaltrust.org.uk

Tel: 0844 800 1895

Email: enquiries@nationaltrust.org.uk

Has information about places to visit and things to do across the UK. The website includes information for people with disabilities.

The Rough Guide to Accessible Britain

Website: accessibleguide.co.uk

An online guide with over 200 ideas for days out aimed at people with disabilities. Includes accessibility information as well as reviews and tips from disabled visitors.

Gardening

Gardening for Disabled Trust

Website: gardeningfordisabledtrust.org.uk

Email:

info@gardeningfordisabledtrust.org.uk

Provides information and advice for disabled gardeners. They also give grants to people to help them continue gardening with disabilities.

Thrive

Website: thrive.org.uk

Tel: 0118 988 5688

Email: info@thrive.org.uk

Helps older and disabled people to continue gardening. Has an information service, a range of publications and a dedicated website with useful advice and tips to help you garden, whatever your disability is.

Music

Sound Sense

Website: soundsense.org

Email: info@soundsense.org

A professional association that promotes community music. Produces an information sheet about instrument adaptations and where to find one-handed instruments.

Photography

Disabled Photographers' Society

Website: 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 accessories that could help. They also have an adaptations coordinator that you can contact for advice about equipment.

Photographers with Disabilities

Website: photographerswithdisabilities.org

Runs photo shoots and Photoshop lessons at their accessible studio in Yate near Bristol.

Puzzles and games

British Jigsaw Puzzle Library

Website: britishjigsawpuzzlelibrary.co.uk

Tel: 01264 393 065

Email: puzzlelibrary@virginmedia.com

Operates a lending library of wooden jigsaw puzzles. For a subscription fee, members can borrow puzzles by post. The jigsaws vary in size and difficulty, and they stock puzzles with larger pieces suitable for people with disabilities.

Partially Sighted Society

Website: 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

Tel: 01296 432 339

Email: enquiries@calibre.org.uk

A national charity that lends unabridged audiobooks to adults and children who have sight problems or other disabilities that make it difficult to use books. The lending service is free, although there is a single joining fee to join the library.

Listening Books

Website: listening-books.org.uk

Tel: 020 7407 9417

Email: info@listening-books.org.uk

A service that provides audiobooks through the post on CD as well as to download or stream online. There is an annual membership fee but this may be paid by your local council.

Playback Recording Service

Website: play-back.com

Tel: 0141 334 2983

Provides a free service transcribing text to audio for people with visual problems. Also has a large library of publications in audio format that you can borrow.

Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)

Website: rnib.org.uk

Helpline: 0303 123 9999

Email: helpline@rnib.org.uk

People with sight problems can sign up to the RNIB Library and receive giant print books and music resources for free. The RNIB Talking Books service offers audiobooks on CD, USB and by digital download. You can also subscribe to RNIB Newsagent, which offers more than 200 popular publications, including daily and weekend newspapers and top-selling magazines, in a variety of audio formats.

Theatre

Official London Theatre

Website: officiallondontheatre.co.uk

A website that provides listings for theatre events in London. It includes an accessibility page with accessible venue and transport guides, as well as information about assisted performances.

Radio

RAIBC

Website: raibc.org.uk

Helpline: **0800 028 8660**

A group for people with disabilities who are interested in amateur radio. Can give advice on equipment and has a quarterly magazine.

Writing

The FED: A Network of Writing and Community Publishers

Website: thefed.btck.co.uk

Email: fedonline1@gmail.com

An organisation for writers' groups and community publishers. Has a number of regional groups, organises writing challenges and has help available for members who lack confidence or wish to develop their skills.

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.

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Every five minutes, stroke destroys lives. We need your support to help rebuild them. Donate or find out more at stroke.org.uk.

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