

Creating a Safe Environment for Those Who Have Experienced a Stroke

According to the National Stroke Association, there are several tips and tricks to making a house more accessible for those who have experienced a stroke.

Forty percent of stroke survivors suffer serious falls within a year after their strokes.

To avoid falls:

- Clear paths to the kitchen, bedroom, and bathroom.
- Move electrical cords out of pathways.
- Wear non-skid shoes and avoid slick surfaces.
- Remove loose carpets and runners in hallways and stairwells or fasten them with non-skid tape to improve traction.
- Replace thick carpeting with lower pile carpeting to make wheelchair or walker movement easier.
- Install handrails for support in going up and down stairs and check to make sure they're securely fastened to the wall.
- Consider stair glides, stair lifts, and platform lifts if stairs are required.

Doing laundry will be less challenging with a few simple changes:

- Move laundry machines to a place where they are easily accessible.
- Stackable, front-loading machines may be easier to reach and take up less space.
- Use easy-to-reach, labeled detergents and laundry supplies.
- Have easy-to-read markings for wash settings.
- Use a nearby table or cart at the right height for sorting and folding.
- Use an ironing board that folds down from the wall.

Making the bedroom safe and comfortable:

- Install a light switch near the bed.
- Move/reorganize clothes and personal items to make them easier to access.
- Use a nightlight and clear a path for easy access to the toilet at night.
- Keep a commode chair near the bed.
- Consider placing disposable "blue pads" underneath the sheets.

Adjusting to challenges in the kitchen:

- If possible, use a stove with push-button controls at the front.
- Install automatic shut-off controls.
- Mount an over-the-stove mirror to help see stovetop contents if cooking while seated.
- Keep a clear space near the stove to place a hot pot or pan quickly.
- Have oven mitts on hand.
- Keep a fire extinguisher nearby.
- Adjust the kitchen table so it is the right height for a wheelchair or for a chair with arms that supports posture.

Special utensils help people with physically-impaired arms and hands at the table:

- Flatware with built-up handles which are easier to grasp.
- Rocker knives for cutting food with one hand.
- Attachable rings which keep food from being pushed off the plate accidentally.

Helpful bathroom devices:

- Grab bars in shower or tub.
- Sturdy handrails.
- Raised toilet seat or toilet chair.
- Tub bench.
- Adjustable or handheld showerhead.
- Bathing supplies that are easy to reach and use.
- Easy-to-use water control knobs with easy-to-see settings or long-handled levers.
- Non-slip flooring strips installed inside and outside of the tub.
- Long-handled brush.
- Squeeze bottles and soap pumps.
- Washing mitt with pockets for soap.
- Soap-on-a-rope.
- Electric toothbrush.
- Flip-top toothpaste tube.
- Electric razor.
- One-piece faucet with lever handles or long extensions, allowing water to be turned on and off with a fist or arm movement.
- Cut-out or roll-under sink, which allows room for legs underneath the sink while seated.
- Suction pads to hold grooming tools or bottles in place on a counter, requiring just one hand to pick up or use.

Resource: National Stroke Association is the leading national non-profit organization devoting all of its efforts and resources to stroke. NSA provides the most up-to-date information on prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and support for stroke survivors and their families. For more information on NSA contact 1-800-STROKES or visit www.stroke.org.