



## HOW STROKE AFFECTS DAILY LIVING

Activities may be affected by Stroke, resulting from the impact of paralysis, poor coordination, loss of feeling, lack of awareness or neglect of one side of the body, or difficulty initiating a movement or planning a sequence of movements. It is important that the person:

- ◆ Slow down
- ◆ Take time
- ◆ Plan a task
- ◆ Break down tasks into a series of simple steps.

There are a variety of aids and techniques for specific disabilities which could be discussed with your therapist.

### SWALLOWING AND EATING

Swallowing muscles may be weak or paralysed following a Stroke and in the most severe cases, a person can choke, even on saliva. In hospital, food and fluids may be delivered via a plastic tube into a vein (intravenous drip) or down the throat via the nose (nasogastric tube). In milder cases, they may cough or splutter after drinking, but will manage semi-solid foods more easily. Sometimes, the problem may be largely associated with poor chewing of food due to weakness of tongue and cheek muscles or ill-fitting dentures. **Coughing and choking are signs that food or drink has entered the windpipe; this in turn can lead to pneumonia.**

A person with only one functioning hand may be aided by large-handled cutlery and a plate-guard to assist "loading" a fork or spoon.

### DRESSING

Dressing difficulties can result from:

- ◆ Weakness on one side of the body
- ◆ Difficulty planning the order in which clothes are put on, and/or
- ◆ The method of putting on each garment.

People who experience dressing difficulties can adapt by learning a set sequence of dressing techniques taught by the therapist. Aids are also available to assist.

PLEASE TURN OVER





## DOMESTIC DUTIES

There are many aids to make household tasks easier, and thereby a return to an independent lifestyle. Community services may be available in your local area to assist.

## LEISURE

After a Stroke, you don't necessarily have to give up your favourite activity. A surprising range of sports and hobbies are on offer for people who have a disability.

## TOILETING

Incontinence is common in the first few weeks after Stroke. **Don't be alarmed because patients may recover full control.** As the person affected by Stroke becomes more aware and more mobile, bladder and bowel control may return. Toilet aids are available to assist.

## DRIVING

After a Stroke your ability to drive may be impaired. A medical assessment and clearance from the Government authority are very important and may be mandatory. Not only do they ensure that you are capable of driving, they are safeguards for your insurance policy.

If you fail to comply, and have an accident you may find that your insurance claim is invalid. Your occupational therapist will discuss your Stroke with you and the implications it will have on your ability to drive. Common sense should prevail with regard to your own and others' safety when considering driving.

**For more information, or to contact a service who specialise in the issues noted above, contact the Stroke Recovery Association on 1300 650 594.**

# Daily Living

