

# Activity and Lifestyle Tips

## Following Stroke



### Active Living

Going back to your everyday activities after having a stroke can be difficult. Read this handout for ideas on how to stay active and live healthy.

**The exercise plan given to you at rehab/on line does not replace being active.**

- Spending less time sitting is important for good health and can make joint pains feel better.
- Sitting for a long time, even if you exercise regularly, can lead to a higher risk of death, obesity, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, cancer.

#### Try to sit less:

- ✓ Stretch a lot during the day
- ✓ Walk around the house when you get a glass of water.
- ✓ Walk, move or stand at every TV commercial break.
- ✓ Get back to hobbies that you enjoyed before your stroke
- ✓ Start with small or low-energy activity (for example, gardening with small containers or pots instead of a full-sized garden)

See the Action Plan Handout for more Information on How to Plan an Activity and Set Realistic *SMART* Goals



The Toronto Public Library has a great series of programs and many of them are free for you to attend. Learn exciting new things, listen to amazing Canadians and ask questions too. There is something for everyone. Call the Toronto Public Library or visit their website to see what's available at a library near you.

**Phone** (416) 363-7131

#### Website:

[www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/programs-and-classes](http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/programs-and-classes)

If the snow and ice is keeping you at home, the Toronto Public Library can bring books, videos and music right to your door. To find out more about the

#### Mobile Library Service:

**Phone** (416) 395-5557

#### Website:

[www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/accessibility/mobile-library](http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/accessibility/mobile-library)

## Hydration



After a stroke people can become dehydrated (water loss) without noticing.

- Dehydration can make you feel irritable, raise the risk of falls (dizziness), infections, constipation, raise your blood sugar levels, and heart rate.
- Instead of drinking large amounts of water at once, sip fluids throughout the day. Don't wait until you are thirsty.
- Normally, you should drink around 6 to 8 cups of non-caffeinated fluids a day. Water is the best choice.
- Caffeinated drinks can cause increased urine (pee) and fluid loss. Drink extra fluids to make up for the loss.
- Add fruits or vegetables such as cucumber or lemon slices to your water for added flavor!

#### You can do a pinch test to find out if you are dehydrated.

- Gently pinch the skin on the back of one of your hands, and release.
- If the skin does not "bounce back", you may need to drink fluids.
- Try this when you are well hydrated so that you have something to compare it to.

## Can I drink alcohol?

- Drinking too much alcohol leads to alcohol-induced high blood pressure, increased risk of blood clots, lower blood flow to the brain, poor blood sugar control.
- If you had an ischemic stroke and you are a heavy drinker, stop drinking alcohol or drink less.
- With ischemic stroke, drinking light to moderate amounts of alcohol may be helpful but overdrinking raises the risk of stroke.
  - Men should limit intake to no more than 2 drinks a day, and women should limit intake to no more than 1 drink per day
- **If you are a non-drinker, you should not start drinking**
- For any other questions about alcohol, speak with your doctor.



## Can I travel?

- Most people can travel after a stroke. Follow these tips for a safe flight and trip.
- The Aerospace Medical Association recommends getting medical clearance from your physician before flying after stroke.
- Do your research before you go. Some tourist cities may not have ramps, elevators or be walker-friendly.
- If you are going somewhere that is high above ground, please speak with your rehab supervisor before you go.
- Ask the airline for special boarding and meals, aisle seating and help with your luggage or wheelchair service, if needed.
- Buy a pillbox that holds pills for each day of the week to keep track of your medicine. Take extra medicine with you in case your return home gets delayed.
- Call your insurance company. Usually, insurance companies provide coverage if there have been no changes in your medicine for 3 months and no visits to the emergency room or hospitals within the last 3 to 6 months. Insurance companies also consider the amount of time since your stroke. Be sure to answer all questions asked by the insurance company.
- Travel with someone (friend or family) and arrive early to the airport.

### While on the plane or during long travel times

- ✓ Don't drink alcohol and caffeinated drinks such as tea and coffee. Keep a bottle of water with you and drink water often to stay hydrated.
- ✓ Take many stretching and walking breaks during long travel times to keep your blood flowing in the legs. Try seated calf muscle pumps.

### During your trip

- ✓ Don't forget to exercise. Pack exercise bands for resistance training and use local maps to find walking routes.
- ✓ If you take Coumadin, eat the same amount of leafy green vegetables each day to keep up your blood clotting (INR) levels.
- ✓ Take a walk right after waking up to help with jet lag and time differences.