

INFORMATION/EDUCATION PAGE

Managing the Transition From Hospital to Home After Stroke: A Patient and Care Partner Guide to Facilitate Discharge Planning



A stroke is a sudden event that occurs with no warning. When you have a stroke you and your care partner can sometimes feel scared or overwhelmed by all the changes that may happen when you go home. It is a good idea to start getting ready to go home as early as you can. There is a lot to think about. Setting goals and making a step-by-step plan to accomplish your goals will make it easier.¹

There is so much to consider and do. How do I get started?

This section describes a helpful way to work through problems you may encounter as you prepare to go home. There are 6 steps to solving a problem (ABCDEF).¹ See [figure 1](#) for an example of how to apply the 6 steps. Step 1: Assess the problem. Ask yourself... what am I having trouble with? What problems might I face when I return home? Make a list, and choose 1 problem to start with. Step 2: Brainstorm. Think about different ways you can solve the problem. There may be many solutions. Be creative, the more ideas the better. Step 3: consider and choose 1 of the solutions. The easiest way to choose a solution is to write down all the good and bad things about each of the solutions you came up with in step 2. After comparing the good and bad things about each solution, pick one that seems most practical. Step 4: Develop a plan. Once you've chosen a solution to your problem, write down a step-by-step plan of action. Be specific about what you are going to do, when, where, and how. Now carry out your plan! Step 5: Evaluate your plan of

action. You've tried out your plan. Did it work completely? If you were successful, congratulate yourself, and start over on step 1 to tackle a new problem. If you were not successful, did something get in the way? What could you do differently to make it work better? You may need to change (or flex) the plan, or choose a different solution from step 2, so move on to step 6. Step 6: flex. If you were unsuccessful, do not give up. You may need some help to solve a particularly sticky problem. That's ok. Remember to congratulate yourself for making progress. Now flex your plan by choosing a different solution in step 3 and/or modifying your plan in step 4. Try out your new plan!

Keep this problem-solving technique in mind as you read the topics below. The topics are areas that you need to think about before going home from the hospital.

Home access/modification

A stroke can affect your ability to carry out your daily routine. You may need to change the space in your home to make it easier to do the things.²

See [table 1](#). If you answered "yes" to any of the problems presented and it is something that is important to you, apply the problem-solving technique to solve it. Get help if needed.

Medication management

You may have new medications to manage. Create a system to track your medications at home.² Some examples are: (1) color code the medication bottles to match a color-coded schedule; (2) set

an alarm (ie, watch, phone, clock) as a reminder; (3) purchase a pill organizer (some have alarms); (4) keep a list of medications on paper or in a medication management app to carry with you to medical appointments; (5) use a medication management mobile application (app). *MediSafe Medication Management* and *My Med Schedule Plus* are available for download on Android and Apple devices.

Community participation

These are activities you participate in outside of your home like attending football games, attending a religious event, or meeting friends. If attending your favorite community activity might be a problem, apply the problem-solving technique to solve it. Get creative! Community participation may also include returning to work.⁴ “Return to work” means different things to different people.⁵ For more information, refer to “Returning to Work after Mild Stroke” at [https://www.archives-pmr.org/article/S0003-9993\(18\)30316-2/pdf](https://www.archives-pmr.org/article/S0003-9993(18)30316-2/pdf).

Social support/support groups

Feeling depressed or alone after a stroke is not uncommon and connecting with others can help with managing those feelings. Stay connected to your social groups. Think about finding new ways to connect as well (church, synagogue, or community center). It can also be helpful to join a stroke support group.⁴ For more mental health information, refer to “Understanding Mental Health Needs after Mild Stroke” at: [https://www.archives-pmr.org/article/S0003-9993\(18\)30313-7/pdf](https://www.archives-pmr.org/article/S0003-9993(18)30313-7/pdf).⁶ To find a support group in your area go to: <https://www.stroke.org/en/stroke-support-group-finder>.⁷ To find an online support group go to: <https://supportnetwork.heart.org/>. If your feelings become difficult to manage, contact your doctor for help.

Organizing your days

After a stroke, you may have a lot of appointments. Create a system to keep you organized. Some examples are: a large paper calendar, a

white board calendar (things can easily be added and erased), a daily/monthly planner notebook, and a smartphone calendar app.

Transportation/driving

Driving yourself may not be safe after a stroke.⁴ Each state has separate return-to-driving requirements. Talk to your doctor before you return to driving. If driving is not an option, consider commercial transportation (taxi or rideshare services) or ask a friend. For other options visit the National Aging and Disability Transportation Center at <https://www.nadtc.org/about/transportation-aging-disability/> or call 1-800-677-1116 for information about accessible transportation in your area.⁸ “Driving after Mild Stroke” is another resource at [https://www.archives-pmr.org/article/S0003-9993\(18\)30313-7/pdf](https://www.archives-pmr.org/article/S0003-9993(18)30313-7/pdf).⁹

Exercise

It is important to exercise to prevent another stroke and maintain overall health.¹⁰ Talk to your doctor before you begin an exercise program. With your doctor’s approval, start with an exercise that is manageable. Consider walking, aquatic exercise, or chair aerobics. Gradually increase your workout time from 10 minutes to 40 minutes. Resistance training is also important. Use elastic bands, free weights, or a weight machine 2-3 days per week. Pick a resistance that you can finish 8-15 repetitions comfortably to start.³ For more tips about healthy lifestyle after a stroke, visit <https://www.stroke.org/en/professionals/stroke-resource-library/post-stroke-care/patient-focused-rehab-resources>.¹¹

Nutrition

Eating a healthy diet is important, ask your doctor or a dietician for help. It is important to understand any food restrictions you may have because of high blood pressure, high cholesterol, or diabetes. Try to avoid processed foods. Eat fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, fish, and lean meats.¹⁰

For healthy recipes, visit <https://www.nchpad.org/643/2611/Recipes~for~Health>.¹²

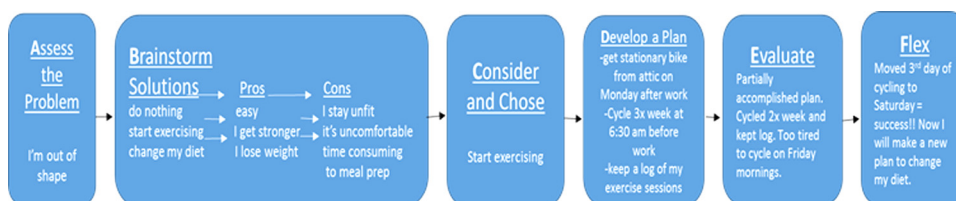


Fig 1 An example of how to apply the problem-solving steps.

Table 1 Items to consider when planning for your discharge home

Will it be a problem to:	YES	NO	YES	NO
Get through doorways			Brush teeth/wash face/shave	
Carry things by yourself			Get in/out of car or other transportation	
Transfer to/from furniture/bed/toilet			Use the bathroom at night	
Go up and down stairs			Get clothes out of the closet	
Get into the bathroom			Dress yourself	
Clean yourself after using the bathroom			Prepare a meal	
Take a shower			Sit at the table	
Do laundry			Pay bills	
Use a computer			Access items in your kitchen	
Take care of pets			Clean and make repairs	
Make appointments			Call Emergency Medical Services	
Reach the sink			Pick up dropped items from floor	

Adapted from the Discharge Planning Assessment Tool <https://twu.edu/occupational-therapy/dpat/>.³

If you feel you may face some challenges once you get home, apply the problem-solving technique. Don't forget you can always ask your doctor, therapist, social worker, psychologist, or anyone else on the medical team to help you come up with solutions and make plans to accomplish your goals.

Authorship

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