

# Living Well

With a stroke: self care booklet



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# Learning to manage your condition

If you have a long-term condition, there are extra things you may need to consider including:

- Making changes to your diet
- Different types of exercise
- Different types of medication you may need to take

**It is important to stay active and do things that are important to you.**

Self care involves looking at what you can do and want to do, rather than what you can't do.

When you talk to your doctor or nurse about your condition, you may want to discuss some of the things you need to do, to stay well.

Some of these will be things that you can do yourself including:

- Eating healthily
- Exercising
- Taking your medicines at the right time

**This booklet is designed to help you live well after a stroke. The information is general as people will be affected differently and have different capabilities. Please use a smart phone to scan the QR codes to find more information, or visit the Long Term Conditions section on the Living Well website.**



## NHS Choices

You can find lots of useful information about keeping well and healthy living ideas on the NHS website.

## Living Well in Bradford district

There's lots of information about healthy living and links to local services and groups on the Living Well website.



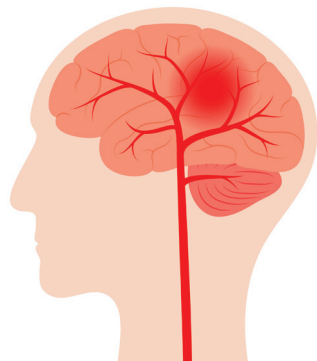
# What is a stroke?

Your brain needs blood to make it work. The blood flows into your brain through small blood vessels and brings the oxygen your brain needs.

If one of those vessels gets blocked, part of your brain won't get any oxygen.

Or if one of those blood vessels bursts open, part of your brain won't get any oxygen.

Without blood your brain cells can be damaged or stop working.



**When a stroke happens, the person needs help quickly.  
Using FAST can greatly improve a person's outcome.**

**F**

## FACE

**Has their face fallen on one side?  
Can they smile?**

**A**

## ARMS

**Can they raise both arms and keep them  
there?**

**S**

## SPEECH

**Is their speech slurred?**

**T**

## TIME

**Call 999 if you see any one of these signs**

Sometimes the effects of a stroke will last only short time, sometimes a few minutes. This is called a mini-stroke or Transient Ischaemic Attack (TIA). The immediate symptoms can last for up to 24 hours.

In the early stages of a TIA, it's not possible to tell whether you're having a TIA or a full stroke.

**It's important to call 999 immediately and ask for an ambulance if you or someone else has symptoms of a TIA or stroke.**

**Even if the symptoms disappear while you're waiting for an ambulance to arrive, you still need to be assessed in hospital.**



You should be referred to see a specialist within 24 hours of the onset of your symptoms.

A TIA is a warning sign that you may be at risk of having a full stroke in the near future, and an assessment can help doctors determine the best way to reduce the chances of that happening.

If you think you may have had a TIA previously, but the symptoms have passed and you did not seek medical advice at the time, make an urgent appointment with a GP. They can determine whether to refer you for a hospital assessment.

People recover from strokes in different ways. Some people will make a good recovery however not everyone will get better.

People who survive a stroke are often left with long-term problems caused by injury to their brain.

Some people need a long period of rehabilitation before they can recover their former independence, while many never fully recover and need ongoing support after their stroke.

Local authorities should provide free reablement services for anyone assessed as needing them.

These services help the person recovering from a stroke learn or relearn the skills they need to live at home independently.



Please scan the QR code to find out about the Bradford Enablement Support Team (BEST).

Or call the Independence Advice Hub:  
01274 435400.



Some people will continue to need some form of care or help with their daily activities.

For example, a care worker may need to come to the person's home to help with washing and dressing, or to provide companionship.

You may also be at risk of other health problems. A chest infection, for example can slow down your recovery.

If you have a really bad stroke then you might have a long-term impairment. It can affect any part of you that your brain controls including:

- Speech
- Movement
- Understanding of things or memory

Having a stroke may change your life, but there are a team of people who can work with you to support and help you adapt to your new way of life. They will try to help you relearn old skills and find ways of managing any new or long-term difficulties.



## Hospital stays

If you have a stay in hospital, when you're ready to be discharged a social worker will work out which services you may need for support.

They will look at your current living situation and if needed they can signpost to other agencies such as Safe and Sound, Housing Options, Fire Service etc.

They will also arrange residential care if you previously lived on your own. A social worker will also assess the needs of family carers to make sure they are supported too.



## People who will help with your recovery

### Occupational Therapist

After having a stroke you may need help to relearn how to do everyday tasks, cope with any long-term impairments and learn new skills. An occupational therapist will work with you and support you with this.

### Physiotherapist

Physiotherapy will usually start as soon as your medical condition has stabilised. The physiotherapist will assess the extent of any physical impairment before working out your treatment plan.

You will have short sessions of physiotherapy that last a few minutes. The sessions will then increase in duration as you start to regain muscle strength and control.

The physiotherapist and occupational therapist will work with you by setting goals depending on your condition.

## Speech and Language Therapist

After having a stroke, you may experience problems with speaking and understanding, as well as with reading and writing. You should see a speech and language therapist as soon as possible for an assessment, and start therapy to help you with communication skills.

Many people also have difficulty swallowing after a stroke. If you do have swallowing problems, they will get better. Your speech and language therapist will work with you and look at ways to help ease the difficulties. This may include changing your diet, making fluids thicker so they are easier to swallow, eating softer food such as mashed potato or changing the temperature of what you eat or drink.

## Optician

A stroke can sometimes damage the parts of the brain that receive, process and understand information sent by the eyes. If you have any problems with your vision after a stroke, you should go and see an optician who will check your vision and suggest possible treatments.

## Helping to prevent further strokes or TIA's

There are some things you can do to lower your chances of having a stroke or having another one in the future. You can do this by making changes to your lifestyle.

### Managing other health conditions

Some health conditions make it more likely that you will have a stroke. High cholesterol, high blood pressure, obesity and diabetes are some of the conditions that give you a greater risk of having a stroke.

It is important that you take any medication you are prescribed and attend any appointments or check-ups. You should have at least an annual review at your GP.



## Blood Pressure

It is very important that you control your blood pressure. Try to find out what your blood pressure was when you had your stroke. An ideal blood pressure reading is often considered as between 90/60mmHg to 120/80mmHg. A



consultant should provide guidance about your target blood pressure.

Regular exercise, avoiding cigarette smoke, not drinking too much alcohol and having a healthy diet are all ways you can help to keep your blood pressure under control.



If you have tried lifestyle measures but your blood pressure remains high then your doctor may want you to take medication. If you have any side effects from the medication you are taking, talk to your doctor about an alternative. Do not just stop taking the medication.

## Cholesterol

Cholesterol is a type of fat that is carried round your body in your blood.

Keeping a low cholesterol level can reduce the risk of having a stroke. After a stroke or TIA the doctor is likely to want to keep your cholesterol and non-HDL (High-Density Lipoproteins) fats as low as you can achieve. You are likely to be prescribed a statin, the aim is to reduce your non-HDL cholesterol (bad fats) by more than 40%.

There are many different types of statin, if you have any side effects from the one you are taking, please talk to your doctor about an alternative. **Do not just stop taking the medication.**

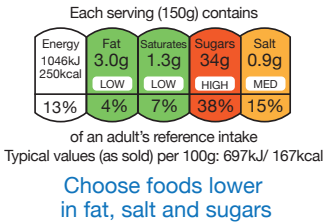


# Eating well

A healthy balanced diet is important for good health. It should include high fibre foods like wholegrains, oats, beans, lentils, nuts, fruits, and vegetables, which are good for keeping your heart healthy and controlling blood pressure.



Check the label on packaged foods



Limiting salt to 6g (1 teaspoon) each day can also help to keep your blood pressure healthy. Look for the traffic-light colours on food packaging to limit foods that are high (red) in salt, sugar, and fat – these are sometimes called ‘ultra-processed’ foods and are not good for our health.

Beans, lentils, and nuts are good sources of protein, and oily fish like salmon, mackerel, pilchards, or tuna, can also help to protect against heart disease. Oily fish, as well as nuts, olive oil, and avocados contain good fats that are good for heart health, while high fat foods such as fatty meats, pies, sausages, and ghee, should be limited.



You can enjoy a balanced diet by making small, gradual changes that you can stick to. Choose unprocessed foods with less ingredients wherever possible to help fuel your body and protect your heart. Scan the QR for info about portions and food groups with the Eatwell Guide.

## Swap Well to Eat Well

Please scan the QR code to find information about healthy eating with recipes and easy food swaps you can make on the Living Well website.



## Diabetes

Diabetes causes you to have too much sugar in your blood. High levels of glucose in your blood can cause your blood vessels to become clogged up, therefore increasing the risk of you having a stroke. If you have diabetes it is very important to try and achieve a stable blood sugar level, your GP and the practice team will support you with this.

## Medication and Treatment

Your doctor will probably prescribe several medicines after you have had a stroke or TIA. For example:

- Anticoagulant medicines (reduces chance of a clot forming)
- Antiplatelet medicines (reduces chance of a clot forming)
- Blood pressure medication to lower your blood pressure.
- Statins to reduce bad fats in your blood.



Other investigations and treatments may be needed depending on the severity of your stroke.

Please scan the QR code to find out more about these treatments.

Combining a healthy diet with regular exercise is the best way to maintain a healthy weight.

Regular exercise can also help lower your cholesterol, keep your blood pressure healthy and help with your emotional wellbeing. For most people, at least 150 minutes (2 hours and 30 minutes) of moderate-intensity aerobic activity every week is recommended. This includes things like cycling or fast walking.

If you're recovering from a stroke, you should discuss possible exercise plans with the members of your rehabilitation team.

Regular exercise may not be possible in the first weeks or months after a stroke, but you should be able to begin exercising once your rehabilitation has progressed.

If you need support to get back into exercise, you may find a referral to the Living Well BEEP team useful.

## Services that will support you

The free annual flu jab can reduce the risk of getting seriously ill in winter months and is available to over 65 year-olds and those with serious medical conditions. Ask your doctor for details. Other vaccinations, including Covid 19, Shingles and Pneumococcal may be available depending on your age and health status.



**When you are recovering after a stroke, your first GP review should be at 6 months and then at least annually.**

## If you drink alcohol, drink within safe limits



Drinking too much alcohol can lead to high blood pressure and trigger atrial fibrillation (irregular heartbeat) which can increase your risk of having a stroke. You're 3 times more likely to have a stroke if you drink heavily. Scan the QR code for NHS info about alcohol.

DrinkCoach is a website where people can find information to make informed choices about alcohol with a quick confidential online quiz and free online coaching sessions. Scan the QR code to find out more.



## Bradford Encouraging Exercise in People (BEEP)



BEEP is a free physical activity referral service that encourages people who are inactive, to become more active, with a 52 week support programme.

BEEP is also a great way for people living with long term health conditions to increase their physical activity levels safely and improve their health. A trained exercise referral officer will work with you to design a bespoke exercise training programme created specifically for you.



Ask at your local GP practice for a referral to the BEEP service. Your GP, nurse or any other health care professional can complete a referral form for you.

Scan the QR code or visit the Living Well website to find out more.

## Support to stop smoking

Quitting smoking is one of the best things that you can do for your health. Research has shown you are up to three times more likely to quit smoking if you use the support of your local Stop Smoking Service in addition to products such as patches or gum.

### The Living Well Stop Smoking Service



This local service can support you with free confidential support to keep you motivated to quit.

When you use the service, you will get one-to-one support from

a friendly trained advisor who will create a 12 week personal quit plan designed with you, to work for you.

Scan the QR code to find out more or visit the Living Well website, or call 01274 437700.



The NHS Smoking Helpline can also offer advice and encouragement to help you quit smoking.  
Call 0300 123 1044.

Scan the QR code to visit the NHS smoke free website.



Healthy  
Minds

Bradford District and Craven  
Health and Care Partnership



**Healthy Minds is your first  
step to mental health  
support in Bradford  
District and Craven**

[www.healthyminds.services](http://www.healthyminds.services)



## Emotional wellbeing

Having a stroke can have a huge impact on your life and that of your family.

Every stroke is different. Everyone's recovery is different. There is life after having a stroke but it may be different to how your life was before.

With the right support and help, things will improve a lot for most people. It is important to keep setting goals and challenges: acknowledge that you might not reach them immediately but every little bit helps.

After a stroke people frequently experience changes in their behaviour and emotions. The effects of a stroke may make a person forgetful, tired, irritable or confused. Stroke survivors may also have feelings of anger, anxiety or depression.

It is important that you recognise these feelings are normal but that you find ways in which you can manage them. Otherwise these emotions may become difficult to deal with and lead to more problems.

Talk to your doctor if these problems are severe or last a long time. They can refer you to a psychiatrist or clinical psychologist.

For some people, medicines and psychological therapies such as counselling or cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) can help. CBT is a therapy that aims to change the way you think about things to produce a more positive state of mind.



Joining a support group is a good way to share experiences, coping methods and tips for recovering with other people who have been affected by a stroke.



Scan the QR code to find out about support if you are a carer.



Scan the QR code to find out about carer's assessments



# Useful contacts

## NHS Choices



Helping you take control of your health and wellbeing. Information on

conditions, treatments, local services and healthy living.

## Different Strokes



For younger stroke survivors, run by younger stroke survivors. They have

personal experience of the realities of life after stroke, recovery and rehabilitation with first-hand knowledge of issues and challenges facing families after stroke.

Call: 0345 1307172.

## Atrial Fibrillation Association (AFA)



Focussing on raising awareness of atrial fibrillation (AF) working to provide

information, support and access to established, new and innovative treatments.

Call: 01789 867502.

## Stroke Association



Supporting people of all ages with helpful advice and guidance

for stroke survivors and their families.

Call: 0303 3033 100.

## Age UK (Bradford & District)



An independent local charity working in the community to help older people.

They offer information, help and support, advice, casework, activities, groups and shopping. The six Hubs across the district.

Call: 01274 391190.

## Headway



Brain injury can challenge every aspect of your life. It can mean losing the life

you once lived and the person you once were. Headway offer support and self-help to those whose lives have been affected by brain injury.

Call: 0808 800 22 44.

## Carers Resource (Bradford)



Information, advice and support for unpaid carers, the people they care for and

professionals who work with them.

Call: 0808 50 15 939.

## NHS Healthier Families



Healthy eating tips and recipes, and fun ways to exercise.

## Living Well

Supporting people in Bradford district to live healthier, more active lives. Call: 01274 438884.



### Living Well Quick Links:

#### Advisor Service



Free, friendly advice and non-judgemental support for anyone needing a little

extra help to start making lifestyle changes. Where to start, what to do next, and signposting to other useful resources and services.

#### Stop Smoking Service



Free confidential 1:1 support to motivate people to quit smoking with a wide

range of options to help combat cravings, including free 12 week vaping kits and prescribed NRT medications.

#### Weight Management Support



12 weeks free access to weight management groups including Slimming World,

APNA Healthy Living and The Brotherhood supporting people to lose weight in a healthy way. (New members only. Offers subject to change).

#### BEEP Exercise Referral Service



A free physical activity referral service encouraging people who

are inactive, to become more active with a 52 week support programme. Also a great option for people living with a long term health condition.



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☎ 01274 438884

The wording in this leaflet can be made available in other formats such as large print and Braille.

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