What to Expect Following a Stroke

Wisdom from a stroke survivor

By Phil B.
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**Immediately after— in the hospital**

- **Confusion at first** Where am I? Sense of direction is poor.
- **Loss of feeling in limbs** and dislocation of joints is often temporary, for example, in arm and shoulders.
- **Sensitivity to light** It is okay to keep your room darkened.
- **Emotional ups and downs** watching TV or listening to music might make you cry.
- **Some unpleasant things are temporary**, like having to wear a diaper, loss of dignity.
- **Speech loss, comprehension loss, poor ability to read** Depending on your stroke type and location is often recovered.
- **Memory losses**... short term and long term Many stroke survivors suffer short term loss, but it usually gets better.
- **Vision and hearing** might be impaired; going cross-eyed temporarily is common.
- **A lot of tests** at all hours—from blood tests to psychology tests.

**As your stay is lengthened— in a rehabilitation unit**

- **Confusion later is also common**, for example, looking at a telephone and trying to recall what to do with it.
- **Expect attention from staff** and ask for what you need, but realize it is not always on your schedule.
- **Be your own advocate** and ask lots of questions. It’s OK to be a pain in the neck!
- **Take advantage of services** offered! Occupational or physical therapy, speech training, nutrition, counseling.
- **Will I or won’t I remain independent** after my hospital stay? Check with social services for ideas on getting to and from places like the doctor, groceries etc.
- **Financial worries**— How will I live? Find a good social worker to help with disability filing etc.
- **Will friends and family react to me** in the same way as they did before my stroke? Will they treat me like an invalid or child? Or, if you are single you may worry, will I ever be attractive again?
- **Depressed feelings** are very common but will ease over time.

**In the long term— looking to the future**

- **On-going therapy is a good thing**— psychotherapy, physical therapy, speech therapy, etc.
- **Support groups are out there**— use them! See back page for more information.
- **Tell your doctor** if you experience ongoing depression.

The most important thing is to be patient and try to keep a positive attitude.