Some Things to Know
When You Return Home After a Stroke

Returning home after a stroke can be challenging. The Michigan Stroke Transitions Trial (MISTT) has helped nearly 200 patients and caregivers returning home after a stroke. You can learn more details about the project at www.mistt.msu.edu.

We would like to share with you what other stroke patients and caregivers have learned from their experience. Hopefully you find this information useful.

KEEPING TRACK OF THINGS AND STAYING ORGANIZED

- Review all of the information you received from the hospital again when you get home. This is important because you will be in a different frame of mind than you were in the hospital.

- Ask a family member or friend to help organize everything.

- Schedule and keep your follow-up physician and therapy appointments. Write down the date, time and who the follow-up appointment is with. This sounds simple but may not be easy if you have a lot of appointments with different members of your health care team.

PHYSICAL, COGNITIVE, AND COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES

- You will be tired in a way you have never been before. Be kind to yourself. Take it easy.

- Normal activities – like taking a shower and getting dressed - will take you longer than usual. Some things you may not be able to do on your own right away or in the way you could before the stroke. Build extra time into your day and ask for help when you need it. Be sure to rest and take your time.

- There may be some things you won't be able to do safely right away. Some – like driving – may be obvious. Others – like shaving when you are taking blood thinners – might not be.   Ask your doctor about what things you should avoid or not do on your own.

- It may be hard to communicate at first. Spelling or writing might be hard. This can be very frustrating.

Turn the page for more tips and information.

EMOTIONAL CHANGES

- It's normal to feel anxiety and stress after a stroke. This can be from changes in your body and the ups and downs of recovery. Changes in your roles and relationships or your finances can be stressful. You may also feel anxiety and stress from the overall uncertainty that comes with having a stroke.

- If anxiety or changes in your mood continue or make it difficult to work on your recovery or do your usual daily activities then it's important to talk to your health care team. Depression can occur after a stroke. It's nothing to be ashamed of. Depression is treatable through medication, counseling, and support groups.

- Don't ignore your emotional and mental health. It can slow down your recovery.

UNCERTAINTY

- It's hard to know what challenges you may face when you go home after a stroke. Some things may not seem like a problem in the hospital, but can be an issue at home. Some things don't show up until later. This can be scary. Talk to family and friends when changes appear and contact your doctor if the problem continues or is gets worse.

- Family and friends who are helping you will make mistakes. It can be hard for them to understand what you are going through. If you are the one who usually takes care of others, the changes may be hard for them to get used to. It's okay to let them know they need to pitch in with the chores.

- Recovery after a stroke can take a long time. Recovery is different for everyone so it's hard to know what it will look like for you. Educating yourself about stroke recovery and getting ongoing support from your health care team and friends and family are key to success.

And, finally, take care of yourself FIRST, even if you are used to taking care of others.