



# spotlight on health

## New Resource Designed To Aid Stroke Victims And Their Caregivers

(NAPSA)—There's good news for those who find they have become a caregiver of a stroke victim. A new resource is available that offers answers to some of the most common questions about the condition.

For example, what medications are usually prescribed? What side effects should you watch for? Does your home need to be modified to meet the needs of the stroke survivor?

The American Stroke Association has released a list of 15 tips to help family members cope with their new role as stroke caregivers. The list runs the gamut from recovery expectations and therapy to resources and preventing secondary stroke.

Katherine Sullivan, Ph.D., PT, a member of the American Stroke Association's Rehabilitation, Prevention and Recovery Committee, said the list should serve as patient and survivor education.

"Each stage after the stroke requires adjustment as both the survivor and the caregiver negotiate the road to recovery," Sullivan said. "Recovery begins the day after stroke, but questions will change as the stroke survivor passes through the hospital phase through return to a healthy and active community life."

"There's a complicated series of paths that one must navigate after a stroke has occurred," said David Alexander, M.D., chairman of the American Stroke Association's Rehabilitation, Prevention and Recovery Committee. "This list is a starting point for answers to common questions and addresses common concerns. It should serve as a resource for caregivers



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and stroke survivors following hospital admission for stroke."

Wendy Sessler said she wished the list was available in 1996, when her mother suffered a stroke that left her paralyzed on the left side. "No one told us what to look for. I had to find out everything on my own."

The list also covers the possible changes in emotion and behavior in stroke survivors. Post-stroke depression is common, with as many as 30-50 percent of stroke survivors developing depression in the early or later phases after their stroke. An estimated 5.8 million stroke survivors are alive today.

Stroke is a medical emergency. For tips, tools and support, visit [www.strokeassociation.org/caregivers](http://www.strokeassociation.org/caregivers).

### Tips On Dealing With Stroke

- 1. It's better to find out than miss out.** Be aware of the medications that have been prescribed to your loved one and their side effects. Ask if your home should be modified to meet the specific needs of the stroke survivor.
- 2. Reduce risks or stroke may strike again.** Survivors who have had one stroke are at high risk of having another one if the treatment recommendations are not followed.
- 3. Many factors influence recovery.** Recovery depends on many different factors: where in the brain the stroke occurred, how much of the brain was affected and how healthy the survivor was before the stroke. Because every stroke and stroke survivor is unique, avoid comparisons.
- 4. Measuring progress matters.** How much acute rehabilitation therapy your loved one receives depends partly on his/her rate of improvement. Stroke survivors on an acute rehabilitation unit are expected to make measurable functional gains every week as measured by the Functional Independence Measure (FIM) score.
- 5. Stop depression before it hinders recovery.** Post-stroke depression is common, with as many as 30-50 percent of stroke survivors developing depression in the early or later phases post stroke. Post-stroke depression can significantly affect your loved one's recovery and rehabilitation. Consult a physician to develop a plan of action.