

Tip Sheet # 25



Going Places with the Stroke Survivor

There are many things to think about when going places with the stroke survivor. Transportation is not always easy after stroke. These are some of the issues that you and the stroke survivor may face while getting out and around. Put a check by the things below that apply to you and the survivor.

- ☐ The survivor wants to drive, but when would he or she be ready?
- ☐ Getting in and out of the car is difficult
- ☐ Getting to appointments is difficult with such a busy schedule
- ☐ Finding transportation is difficult
- ☐ Dealing with personal needs of the survivor is difficult while out
- ☐ Finding places that are handicap accessible is difficult
- ☐ Not sure where to go that would be easy and enjoyable
- ☐ Other _____
- ☐ Other _____
- ☐ Other _____

The survivor wants to drive, but when would he or she be ready?

This is a common concern for many survivors after a stroke. The after effects of a stroke may impair the survivor's ability to judge distance or speed, remember directions, avoid accidents, or may cause other safety issues. The survivor may think they can drive, but may be unsafe due to their brain injury from the stroke.

- Talk to the doctor or occupational therapist about when they think the survivor would be able to drive.
- Warning signs of unsafe driving may include driving too fast or too slow, needing help or instructions from passengers, failing to

observe signs or signals, slow or poor distance decisions, drifting across lane markings, accidents or close calls, often getting lost, or getting easily frustrated or confused.

- Contact your State Department of Motor Vehicles and ask for the Office of Driver Safety. Tell them about the stroke and ask about special requirements. Ask them about getting the survivor's driving tested. Ask about driver training programs as well.



Getting in and out of the car is difficult

This can be especially difficult if the survivor is paralyzed on one or both sides. Dealing with a wheelchair can be a challenge as well.

- **Ask a therapist to watch you get the survivor in and out of the car.** The therapist can train both you and the survivor on the easiest and safest ways to do this.
- When renting a wheelchair, ask for the lightest weight available. Wheelchairs can be very heavy and getting them in and out of the car can cause injury if you are not careful. You might want to also put an old blanket over the back of the car when getting the wheelchair in and out of the trunk to avoid scratches and dents.
- If you have several errands to make, you might ask someone to come along and sit with the survivor while you run in and out of stores and places. This can save time and also allow the survivor to get out of the house. **Do not leave the survivor in the car alone, especially if the weather is cold or hot outside.**
- Ask the doctor if they can sign a form allowing you to get a handicap sticker for your car. You can get the form from your local Department of Motor Vehicles. Not only will this save you and the survivor some walking, but it will also allow you to park in extra wide parking places where you will have more room to get the survivor in and out of the car.



Getting to appointments is difficult with such a busy schedule

Face it, survivors often have many doctor appointments, therapy appointments, and other places they need to be. You as a caregiver may have places you need to be.

- Keep a calendar of appointments for the survivor and yourself so that you can keep track of where you and the survivor need to be. Some caregivers use paper calendars; others use electronic calendars on their computer or phone.
- Be realistic in what you and the survivor are able to do. You may need to rethink your schedule. **See Skill-Building Tip Sheet #SB3. Maintaining realistic schedule and expectations** for ideas on how to get everything done.
- Ask friends and family to help transport the survivor places. **See Tip Sheet #29 Finding the best way to ask family and friends for help.** Don't try to take on all of the survivor's care on by yourself. Let others help you and the survivor as much as possible.



Finding transportation is difficult

- There are a variety of transportation services available to disabled persons in the community.
 - Call CICOA: The Access Network at 1-317-254-5465 or Council on Aging for Southwest Ohio (800) 252-0155.
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Dealing with personal needs of the survivor is difficult while out

It is always best to plan ahead when taking the survivor out. Things often take longer than expected when taking the survivor along. Here are some tips to help you prepare.

- Take simple, short outings at first. Work up to longer trips.
- Have the survivor use the bathroom before you leave. You may want to take a urinal along if the survivor is male in case of emergencies. Take a complete change of clothes and wet wipes along too in case of accidents.
- Call ahead to see if there are handicap bathrooms available before leaving the house. This may be especially important if going to restaurants, out shopping, and such. You may also want to take along someone of the same gender to help the survivor in the bathroom. Family bathrooms are very helpful for caregivers and survivors if they are available.
- Keep snacks and water in the car. It may be a while between stops. It is also a good idea to bring the survivor's medications with you in case you are out longer than expected.
- Take enough clothes for weather changes. Dressing in layers may be especially helpful for temperature changes.





Finding places that are handicap accessible is difficult

Most places will say that they are handicap accessible, but don't take their word for it. Be sure to call ahead and ask specific questions like:

- Is your bathroom big enough to get a wheelchair in and out? Some places have handicap bathrooms, but the door is too narrow to get the wheelchair into it.
- Are there steps leading into or out of the building? Are tables and chairs spaced far enough apart so that a wheelchair can get through?
- Ask other caregivers and survivors about good places to go if the survivor is in a wheelchair. Word of mouth is often the best way to find out the best places to go. See **Tip Sheet #8 Where to Find Resources** for a list of stroke support groups where you can meet other survivors and caregivers.



Not sure where to go that would be easy and enjoyable?

It is important for you as well as the survivor to get out of the house and to socialize with others. Here are some ideas:

- Pick a restaurant during a time when there is less noise and people. You will get better service, and the survivor will be less distracted.
- Shop during less busy times of the day. Plan for lots of rest breaks.
- Think of getting tickets to events such as movies, plays, or sports events. When you call for tickets for an event, ask about handicap

seating. Also ask about stairs, ramps, bathrooms, and parking places.

- Ask the survivor's recreational therapist or occupational therapist about fun places to go that would be easy for you and the survivor.
- Ask other stroke survivors and caregivers about fun places to go that are handicap accessible. **See Tip Sheet #8 Where to find resources for a list of stroke support groups.** Tip Sheet #8 also has a lot of other resources for finding transportation and other community activities for older adults or for those who are disabled.
- See **Tip Sheet #16 Keeping the stroke survivor socially active.** This tip sheet has lots of ideas on how to plan activities and visits with others. Try not to let the survivor or yourself become isolated and cut off from the world around you.

