

Intimacy and Sex After Stroke

Feel free to ask your healthcare team members questions about sexuality and intimacy. Here are some answers to frequently asked questions.

Is it safe to have sex after having a stroke?

YES. For most people it is safe to have sex after having a stroke.

Talk to your doctor if:

- you have uncontrolled blood pressure
- you have had a heart attack



Why has my sex life changed since having a stroke?

Intimacy (feeling close with another person) and sexual function (what you do sexually and how your body responds) can be affected by having a stroke. Changes to your sex life can be from:

- **the effects of the stroke.** Having a stroke may change your ability to move, feel, and communicate. A stroke may also lessen your interest in sexual activity and your ability to get aroused.
- **feeling tired.** You may feel tired doing everyday activities such as walking or bathing, etc. It may be difficult to get 'in the mood' when you are tired.
- **mood changes.** Depression or changes in self-image may occur after a stroke. These changes may lessen your interest in sexual activity.
- **medications you are taking.** Certain medications that prevent having another stroke may affect your sexual function (see stroke medications pamphlet for more information).

How can I cope with these changes to my sex life?

- Talk with your partner if you have concerns about sexual activity.
- Plan sexual activity at the times of day when you have the most energy.
- Use positioning aids or devices to make sexual activity more comfortable (ask your team for additional resources).



How do I bring intimacy and sex into my life?

- Talk with your partner about bringing intimacy and sex into your relationship in ways that make you both feel comfortable.
- Start slowly by doing intimate things such as kissing and hugging.
- Plan sexual activity when you and your partner are relaxed and well-rested.
- Give yourself enough time to get 'in the mood'.
- Create a setting that is relaxing, comfortable and sensual.

Where can I find more help?

- The Stroke Foundation of New Zealand Information brochure <http://www.stroke.org.nz/resources/Sexuality-Booklet.pdf>.
- Stroke Engine: Sexuality Information for Patients and Families <https://www.strokingengine.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Sexuality-Patient-Family-InformationJan2011.pdf>
- Some people may need help from a certified sex therapist. Find a certified sex therapist near you: <http://www.bestco.info/> Note that sex therapy is **not covered** by the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP).

We have more information that you may find helpful. Ask your healthcare team if you would like more information on your sexual health after stroke.

