

Stroke News

Winter 2021

For everyone affected by stroke

Stroke
Association

"It's been hell.
But now I celebrate
every tiny step"
**Sarah Jay shares
the moment when
she found hope
after stroke**



Winter wellbeing special

- Mental health after stroke
- The joy of cooking
- Peer support for young stroke survivors
- Tips for staying active



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Editor's letter

The winter months can be challenging for our wellbeing. In this issue, stroke survivors share the ways they've found to look after their mental and physical health. Keen gardener Neil loves spending time outdoors (page 28), while Edward (page 27) enjoys chatting about his experiences at a peer support group for younger stroke survivors. And Loretta is taking part in an exciting research study to find out how we can improve the mental health of stroke survivors and carers. You can find out more on page 22.

Our cover star Sarah Jay was told she would never read again – but sitting at her piano gave her that moment of hope which helped

her to rebuild her life. Read her inspiring story on page 8.

Your support helps us to continue improving the lives of stroke survivors across the UK. After four-year-old Sebastian had multiple strokes, his family were determined to raise funds and awareness of childhood stroke. Meet Team Seb on page 39.

I hope you enjoy this issue.



Nathalie Colvey, Editor

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Over to you

It was just a normal Saturday. I listened to sport on the radio, had tea with my wife and we watched a film. But an hour after going to bed I woke up, shouting to my wife to help me as I knew something was wrong. My arm was numb. I did not even think it was attached to my body.

I was rushed to hospital where I had a brain scan. My phone had run out of charge and my wife couldn't visit because of Covid-19. I felt alone and did not know if I would come out of hospital or when I would speak to my loved ones again.

The consultant confirmed that I had had a stroke in my left cortex with a blood clot in my neck. As it was caught quickly, this made the stroke milder.

Today, I am living my life as best I can. I do my hand exercises and small walks when I am not too tired. I do jigsaws to help with my fine motor skills.

At 62 I still feel far too young to have a stroke. But it is time to block the negative thoughts and remember what I have, a loving family and massive support.

Yannis Henderson

Stroke Helpline: **0303 3033 100**

Find your local services, clubs and groups: **stroke.org.uk/support**

Join our online community: **mystrokeguide.com**

Find information about stroke: **stroke.org.uk/publications**



Do you have something to share?

Email **strokenews@stroke.org.uk** or write to us at Stroke News, Stroke Association, 1 Sterling Business Park, Salthouse Road, Brackmills, Northampton, NN4 7EX.

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From our Chief Executive

Hope is incredibly important for the 1.3 million stroke survivors in this country. That moment that gives you the drive to rebuild your life, no matter how tough things might be.

For musician Sarah (p8), it was placing her hand on her piano keys. For somebody else it could be wiggling a finger, or joining a stroke support group where people understand what they're going through.

However you're affected by stroke, we're here to help you find hope. Our local coordinators and groups offer practical and emotional support when you need it most. And you can find more information and support by calling our Stroke Helpline on **0303 3033 100** or visiting **stroke.org.uk** or **mystrokeguide.com**.

Rebuilding lives after stroke is a team effort. I'm proud of how the stroke community came together for our Priority Setting Partnership in research, which you can read about on page 13.



With help from stroke survivors, carers and health professionals we've shared the key questions which stroke research needs to answer. And our network of campaigners are fighting hard for improvements to stroke care across the four nations – on page 18 you can find out more about our campaign in Northern Ireland and how you can get involved.

Thank you for being part of our community and I wish you a happy Christmas and New Year.

Juliet Bouverie OBE

A note of hope after stroke

Recovery from a stroke can be a long and difficult process. But moments of hope are what keep stroke survivors like Sarah Jay Hawley going. The professional singer-songwriter and music teacher, 53 from Sheffield, was told she would never read again after her stroke.

"I woke in the middle of the night with pins and needles shooting through the right side of my body, face and brain. I was terrified. I didn't have any support, just my daughter who was 15.

"In the early days and weeks following my stroke, my Stroke Association Support Coordinator Karen helped me find hope. Karen came to my home once a week, and supported me in ways beyond the call of duty. She was full of warmth, encouragement and all of those things that are essential when you're thrust back into the world, and it's like, 'What now?'

"Karen encouraged me to play my piano and to sing. One of the first things I did was sit at my piano and play a chord. It felt like I could see the chords and the vibrations as patterns and swirls. It was just beautiful and a first moment of hope for me during my recovery.

"I've had to focus on what I am able to do rather than what I should be able to do. Now I celebrate every tiny step."





"I could read individual words slowly but couldn't piece them together. As a musician and writer I was adamant there was no way that I was going to lose that part of my life. I had an idea to write short stories behind all the songs I'd written. So I started writing, very slowly. This has developed into my first book, which has been an amazing journey. The book is about recovery, hope and resilience and the healing power of music and creativity.

"Within a year of my stroke, I had breast cancer, surgery, and then a car crash on the last day of the radiotherapy. It's been hell. But recently I was able to host my daughter's 21st birthday, which was quite a profound experience.

Just pure joy, laughter, and complete gratitude that I am alive.

"Support from the Stroke Association was invaluable, because Karen had time for me, for my story, for my ranting, for my crying, for my joy, for my laughter. She was a beacon of light. But she was only able to help me because of the Stroke Association and the people who support it."



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Setting the agenda for stroke research

Research plays a vital role in rebuilding lives after stroke, through understanding what causes strokes in the first place, developing new treatments, and finding the best ways to support stroke survivors.

Until now, those most affected by stroke haven't had enough say in what kind of research gets funded. Our Stroke Priority Setting Partnership (PSP), which concluded earlier this year, aimed to identify the research areas that matter most to stroke survivors, carers and professionals.

"With stroke research budgets stretched more than ever before due to the pandemic, we need to make sure funding is available where it makes the biggest difference," says Dr Richard Francis, Head of Research at the Stroke Association.

"The Stroke PSP asked stroke survivors, carers and health professionals what questions they need research to answer, ensuring that the needs of people affected by stroke are at the heart of research funding and planning."



"Stroke survivors have a unique perspective as we know what it's like to be at the receiving end of care."

Annabel, stroke survivor

We followed a process laid out by the James Lind Alliance, a non-profit initiative which has supported Priority Setting Partnerships for many different health conditions. Stroke survivors and carers were at the heart of every stage of the project. Their input helped us to collect and prioritise around 4,000 questions to identify uncertainties in stroke care that are most important for research to address.

Annabel Wright, 23 from London, shared her experiences in workshops for the Stroke PSP. "My stroke occurred on Easter Sunday in 2019, while I was in my third year of university," she says.

"I was looking at my phone when suddenly half of my visual field dissolved. I couldn't read or look at anything and had a terrible headache. At hospital I was told that I'd had a stroke caused by a hole in my heart.

"Nearly three years on, my vision is still very much affected – I have residual 'blind spots' that worsen if I strain my vision a lot. And I wasn't prepared for the psychological aspect of going through a stroke – I still suffer from health anxiety."

She's pleased that stroke survivors are part of the conversation around priorities for research.

"This will help research with its aim to increase medical understanding and improve outcomes for people affected by stroke," she says.



Dr Shirley Thomas, Associate Professor of Rehabilitation Psychology at the University of

Nottingham, agrees that it's really valuable for people affected by stroke to have a voice in setting research priorities.

"One of the biggest challenges for myself and my colleagues is securing funding. It's particularly challenging in stroke, a complex and underfunded area of health research," she explains.

"It's vital to direct funds to the areas of greatest need so research can inform improvements in treatment and care that will bring the most benefit to people affected by stroke. The Stroke PSP results will help research to increase evidence in these areas."

What are the priorities identified by the PSP?

The Stroke PSP identified 10 priorities for research in two lists that cover the entire stroke care pathway. The priorities include research into:

- Ways to stop stroke happening for the first time.
- The benefits and risks of new therapies for stroke.
- Mental and emotional problems caused by stroke.
- Fatigue after stroke.



To see the full list and find out more about the PSP, visit **stroke.org.uk/PSP**.

What needs to happen now?

The priorities tell us the areas where research is most needed to improve treatment and care. This is the first step. We're calling on the stroke community to continue to invest in these areas so research can make the biggest difference to the lives of people affected by stroke.



Email **research@stroke.org.uk** to find out how to get involved with our research.



Increasing accessibility for people with aphasia

Over one third of stroke survivors have aphasia, a language and communication disorder which affects a person's ability to understand, speak, read, write and use numbers – but not their intelligence.

Mark Chappell, 52 from Yorkshire, has lived with aphasia since having a stroke in 2012. "Social situations are very difficult and tiring," he says. "Most conversations are so fast that it's often easier to keep quiet in company as I can't keep

up. In restaurants and cafés, I can't understand menus with their small print and there are too many choices. I rely on my wife Caroline to read them for me. And in shops, there is too much information and too many signs for my brain to process."

Going to shops and businesses can be even more stressful if you're not confident how you'll be treated. In some places staff have completely ignored Mark. "Everyone wants to be treated as human, even when you can't get the words out," he says.



Find out more about the UK Communication Access Symbol or sign up for free training at communication-access.co.uk.

Now, a scheme led by the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists and supported by the Stroke Association aims to make it easier for people like Mark to use businesses and services with confidence.

The Communication Access UK initiative offers free training for organisations and individuals to support people with communication difficulties like aphasia. Organisations can be accredited as 'Communications Accessible' and display the new Communication Access Symbol in their premises. Wherever you see the symbol displayed, you'll know that staff have the skills to engage with people with communication difficulties.

"The Communication Access Symbol is really important for me and so many other people," explains Mark.

"Going out to the shops or any service provider when you have aphasia can be a massive thing, especially after being isolated during lockdown. But knowing that the staff have been trained and would take time to talk to me would put me at ease."

As the pandemic recedes, Mark plans to gain extra confidence from spreading the word about the initiative to his local businesses. "We each have the power to make a difference and do something good in our community by encouraging more people to sign up."

The fight to reshape stroke

We believe that improving stroke services across the UK will save lives, reduce disabilities and ensure everyone affected by stroke gets timely access to the highest-quality treatment and care. But frustratingly, in Northern Ireland progress in reshaping stroke care has stalled.

In 2019, the Department of Health in Northern Ireland launched a public consultation on plans to reshape how its stroke services are delivered. It made a number of commitments to improve the stroke pathway, from establishing specialised hyperacute stroke units to improving rehabilitation and long-term support for stroke survivors.

Sadly, due to the Covid-19 pandemic very little progress has been made since the consultation closed over two years ago. This is disappointing news for stroke survivors like Rosemary Valente, 61 from County Down.

"When I left hospital after my stroke, I was given a few leaflets but my brain couldn't process that

information," she says. "I didn't know where to turn and I felt a bit abandoned until I got support from the Stroke Association.

"I'm frustrated at the lack of progress with reshaping stroke care in Northern Ireland. Stroke services including rehabilitation need to be urgently improved to help stroke survivors in Northern Ireland rebuild their lives."

With Assembly elections coming up next year, Rosemary is working with us to call on the Northern Ireland Government to urgently resume its plans for reshaping stroke care and meet the commitments it made in 2019.

"We need these plans to move forward," says Rosemary. "Stroke doesn't wait for anyone."

care in Northern Ireland



Join our Campaigns Network to help us to improve stroke services for people affected by stroke in Northern Ireland and across the UK. Sign up at [stroke.org.uk/campaigners](https://www.stroke.org.uk/campaigners).

Support for carers

Caring for a stroke survivor can be challenging, emotionally and physically – but it's important to look after yourself, too. Hope Galvin from our Stroke Helpline explains what support is available for you if you are a carer.

How do I get support as a carer?

You're entitled to a carer's assessment by your local authority adult social services department. This looks at the impact that caring has on your life, and what support you might need to help you in your caring role, and improve your wellbeing. You are entitled to receive help, even if the person you care for doesn't want any support for themselves.

You may also be entitled to respite care, where someone else will provide care so you can take a break.

Can I get any financial help?

You may be entitled to claim Carer's Allowance if you care for someone for at least 35 hours a week. You do not have to be

related to, or live with, the person you care for, and the money is paid directly to you. The person you care for must already get one of the qualifying benefits such as Personal Independence Payment (PIP) or Attendance Allowance. Find out more at gov.uk/carers-allowance.

How can I look after my own wellbeing?

- Register as a carer with your GP. This can help you access support such as regular health check-ups and mental health support.
- Keep a diary of all the care you provide. This can help you to identify any areas where you need more support.
- Staying active and exercising regularly can help increase your energy levels, help you sleep better and improve your mood.



- If you need to physically move the person you care for, a nurse or occupational therapist can show techniques to do it safely.
- If it's possible, try to organise your day with regular breaks from your caring responsibilities.
- Try to keep in touch with friends and family. People around you may also be able to do some practical things like shopping, or spend time with the stroke survivor too.



More information and support

Download our leaflet 'A carer's guide to stroke' at stroke.org.uk/carers.

You can connect with other carers through My Stroke Guide, our online support tool, at mystrokeguide.com.

Carers Trust (carers.org) and Carers UK (www.carersuk.org) are charities that offer support and information for carers.



Improving wellbeing after

Stroke can bring huge emotional challenges. It can affect every aspect of your life, leaving you feeling shocked, angry, and grieving for the life you had before. So it's not surprising that the Stroke Priority Setting Partnership led by our charity identified improving care for psychological wellbeing after stroke as one of the top priorities for stroke research (see page 13).

Loretta Hanley, 57 from Manchester, found her mental health took a huge dip after her stroke.

"I was near the hospital when my stroke happened because I was visiting my mother. I saw someone come out of the hospital and explained to them that I was feeling a numbness in the left side of my body. It was when I arrived in A&E that I was told I'd had a stroke.

"I didn't believe I'd had a stroke at first. I tried to be as normal as I could, but when the truth caught up with me, I just went down. I tried to do things, but it was like learning again, going back to not being able to write. Everything stopped and it was like being a baby again. It makes me mad. I get so frustrated."

stroke





Find out more about Emma's research at stroke.org.uk/wellbeing-research.

Read more about looking after your wellbeing at stroke.org.uk/emotional-health.

Through her local stroke group Loretta signed up to take part in research led by Dr Emma Patchwood at the University of Manchester. Emma is funded by the Stroke Association and is investigating ways we can improve the mental wellbeing of stroke survivors and carers.

"Too many stroke survivors struggle with their mental health," says Emma. "My research is about helping people improve their own

mental and emotional wellbeing, by working with the effects of stroke, not against them."

Emma is hoping to test and develop treatments based on Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, where stroke survivors are supported to help them come to terms with the debilitating effects of stroke. People affected by stroke could learn to practise these techniques on their own,

Dr Emma Patchwood's tips for looking after your wellbeing

✓ Connect with loved ones

If you can't see friends or family face to face, use the phone or video calling to check in and talk about good times you've shared, like birthdays or holidays.

✓ Talk to other stroke survivors

You can talk to someone who knows how you feel by joining a group or through the My Stroke Guide discussion forums, Here For You telephone service and the Stroke Helpline.

✓ Switch off the news

Too much negative information can feed anxiety. Try to limit this by setting aside a short and fixed amount of time to get up to speed with current events.

✓ Do things you enjoy

Watch your favourite film, take part in a hobby, do a leisure activity or look through a photo album. You could try writing down your experiences or have a go at drawing.

empowering them to protect their wellbeing and rebuild their lives after stroke.

"These techniques could help people have positive transformational shifts in thinking about their own lives," Emma explains. "It's a bit like a puzzle where, with the right perspective, you might be able to see things differently and the picture makes sense again."

Since being involved in the study, Loretta has found the techniques useful for dealing with the daily frustrations that she faces.

"I have made progress. I try my best and I push myself, even though it takes its toll on me," she says. "It makes me feel good to know that I'm helping out. The research will help everyone in the long run, so people don't have to suffer like they do. If I hadn't taken part, I don't think I'd feel as good as I do now."



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"It makes me feel better to help others"

Days after his 21st birthday, Edward Kelly, 40 from the Isle of Man, had a devastating stroke. Our peer support groups for younger stroke survivors have helped him share his positive attitude to recovery.

"I've always enjoyed interacting with people, whether it's banter with colleagues or chatting with strangers. When the Stroke Association invited me to an online support group for young stroke survivors, I jumped at the chance to share my experiences. It makes me feel better to know I can help others in some way.

"Everyone in the group was affected differently by their stroke. Some were dealing with physical disability, others with daily pain or difficulties with speech. This reminded me that everybody has their own struggles and I count

myself lucky that the outcome of my stroke wasn't worse.

"I would say that my life is more meaningful since my stroke. I see having the stroke as gaining a superpower that I can use to inspire others by just getting on with it."



To find out more about our peer support groups, email lasc@stroke.org.uk.



"Being outside makes you forget the day-to-day problems"

For stroke survivor Neil Murray, 57 from Dunfermline, spending time gardening and with his animals is the key to wellbeing.

"After my stroke, I spent far too much time trying to go back to the person I had been beforehand. Eventually, I realised that I needed to embrace the new me. I had a new outlook on life and took things more slowly and learned to appreciate what I had.

"My garden is a safe and enjoyable space away from the trip and fall hazards inside. I spend time on growing fruit and vegetables that are easy to grow and harvest. There is



always a satisfaction when growing produce and you can take them inside to eat.

"Being outside relieves stress and can make you forget the day-to-day problems everyone experiences. I can really feel the health benefits of the fresh air and sunshine – much better than sitting in the house!"



Find out more about the benefits of gardening and other hobbies at stroke.org.uk/hobbies.

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Stay active after stroke

Being active is good for everyone. It's an important way to improve balance and mobility and protect wellbeing, and can reduce the risk of further strokes. It also boosts mental health and helps us feel more connected to other people.

Royal Navy veteran and keen golfer Phil Wilson, 65 from Stockport, enjoyed an active lifestyle until a stroke in 2016 left him paralysed down the left side of his body. Then he was diagnosed with a spinal tumour and prostate cancer.

"I used lots of repetitive exercises to help my recovery," he says. "Like taking tins out of the cupboard and putting them back in to exercise my arm."





Find out more about getting moving after stroke at stroke.org.uk/moving and weareundefeatable.co.uk.

Phil faced another cruel setback when Elaine, his wife and support for 41 years, passed away unexpectedly three years after his stroke. His children and grandchildren gave him invaluable support through the tough times. "They wouldn't allow me to focus on self-pity," he says. "The family joke became who would walk and talk first – me, or my one-year-old granddaughter Olivia. She won."

Physical activity doesn't have to mean sweating it out at the gym, if that's not your thing. Walking, gardening, carrying shopping and doing housework are all great ways to build more activity into your everyday routine.

What's most important is finding a way of getting moving that works for you. "Being active gives you a positive frame of mind, which in turn helps you become more active – a virtuous circle for stroke survivors," explains Phil.

Phil's tips for staying active after stroke

- Listen to your body. If you feel tired, take a rest.
 - Track your progress. You'll be amazed how far you've come.
 - Get your family involved. Make it a joint effort to be active and assist your recovery.
 - You can do it. It may take you a while, but you will succeed.
-

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The promoter of this lottery is Juliet Bouverie, CEO, Stroke Association, Stroke Association House, 240 City Road, London EC1V 2PR. Please play responsibly. Registered with the Gambling Commission. www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk.

Players must be 18 or over and live in Great Britain. The Stroke Association is registered as a charity in England and Wales (No 211015) and in Scotland (SC037789). © Stroke Association 2021





The joy of cooking

Making healthy homemade meals is an easy way to control your salt intake, reducing your risk of stroke. Studies suggest cooking can also help reduce depression and anxiety and help build social connections.

Chris King, 55 from Sandwich, Kent, shared his passion for food in a 30-year career as a chef. But his life changed in an instant when a stroke left him paralysed down his left side.

"No longer being able to do the job I loved left me feeling lost and very low. I felt hopeless and like a burden to everyone, and to be honest I just wanted to call it a day," he remembers. "Then one day I decided to see if my experience could help other

people who were in a similar situation. It was the best thing I ever did."

Chris offered his services as a volunteer at Chequers Kitchen cookery school in Deal. Now he shares his skills with other stroke survivors, showing them how to cook delicious, fresh meals. This autumn, he's running online classes hosted by the Stroke Association for stroke survivors in the south of England.

"Getting back in the kitchen gave me a purpose and a chance to help others. It gave me something to look forward to," he says. "It was nice to put my experience to good use and help people who are struggling with anxiety or confidence. It's great when I see people realise: 'If he can do it, what's my excuse to say I can't?'"





What we eat plays an important role in stroke prevention, explains Dr Sarah Jarvis, GP and adviser to our partners LoSalt®.

"Sodium in salt is linked to high blood pressure, which is a contributing factor in around half of all strokes," she says. "We are consuming 8.4g of salt a day, which is far too much and way beyond the maximum intake of 6g that is recommended.

"But making changes to your diet doesn't have to be difficult. A few simple actions can have a big impact on your overall health and wellbeing."

Chris agrees: "When I cook fresh food I know I have control over salt, fat and sugar content, and that gives me confidence in what I am eating. I still enjoy a good cake or biscuit, or my favourite TV dinner – homemade pizza. But because I make them myself I know what's in them."



- LoSalt® contains 66% less sodium than regular salts*.
- This winter, for every promotional tub sold, LoSalt® will donate 20p to the Stroke Association to help us rebuild lives after stroke.
- For more information about LoSalt®'s Season with Sense campaign, visit seasonwithsense.com.

* If you take medication that affects potassium levels, for conditions including diabetes, heart or kidney disorders, speak to your GP first to check if reduced sodium salt alternatives are suitable for you.

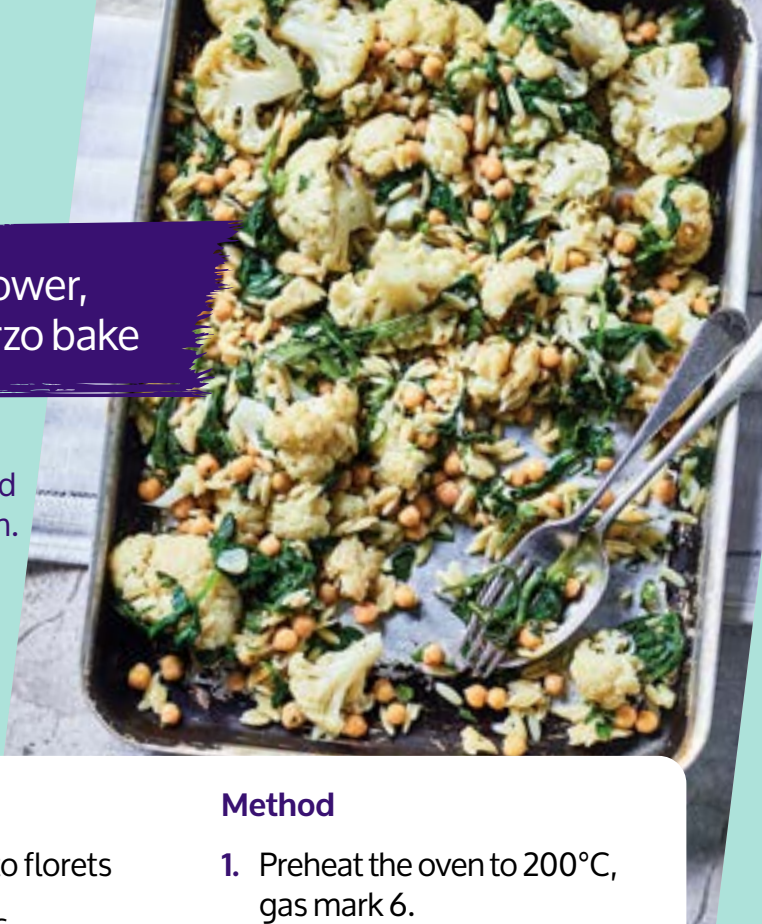
Roasted cauliflower, chickpea and orzo bake

This winter warmer makes a delicious and healthy Sunday lunch.

Prep: 15 minutes

Cook: 30 minutes

Serves: 4



Ingredients

1 cauliflower, cut into florets

400g can chickpeas,
drained and rinsed

2 cloves garlic, sliced

1 tsp LoSalt® (optional)*

1½ tbsp extra virgin olive oil

150g orzo pasta

500ml very low salt
vegetable stock, hot

150g spinach

2 tbsp chopped parsley

2 tbsp chopped coriander

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 200°C, gas mark 6.
2. Place the cauliflower, chickpeas and garlic in a roasting tin, toss in the LoSalt, oil and a little black pepper, and roast for 10 minutes.
3. Stir in the orzo and stock and cook for 15 minutes, stirring halfway through.
4. Stir in the spinach and herbs and cook for a further 5 minutes until wilted.

Visit our shop to help bring hope this Christmas

Our Christmas shop has lots of little ways to send love to those near and far, including cards for that someone special, and gift wrap and tags to give your presents extra cheer.

Everything you buy will help support stroke survivors and their loved ones.

See the full festive range at
stroke.org.uk/Christmas

Stroke
Association





Raising awareness of childhood stroke

There are over 400 childhood strokes a year in the UK. After Sebastian Metcalfe from Bradford had a series of strokes at just four years old, his mum Kimberley was determined to raise awareness of the condition.

"I didn't even know young people were affected by stroke," she says. "Even the doctors weren't sure – at first we were told he had epilepsy.

"Sebastian suffers a lot with fatigue – he just can't do the things his friends can. His speech has been affected too, he knows what he wants to say but the

words just won't come, so he gets very frustrated. But I'm so proud of him, we've spent many weeks in hospital and even though he's tired, he just keeps going."

In September, 'Team Seb' – Kimberley, Sebastian's dad Thomas and other family members – took part in the Great Manchester Run and raised over £4,000 for the Stroke Association.

"Hopefully we'll get more people talking about childhood stroke and recognising the signs," Kimberley says. "We want more people talking about stroke in children."



Find out more about the signs and effects of childhood stroke at stroke.org.uk/childhood-stroke.

Welsh language support

Wales is home to more than 70,000 stroke survivors, and 7,400 strokes happen in the country every year. Nearly a third of people who live in Wales speak the Welsh language, and with research showing that providing support to people in their first language improves their recovery, it's vital that people affected by stroke can get support in Welsh.

Arnot Hughes, 74 from Llandaff, Cardiff was left with communication difficulties after having a stroke in February 2020. "Speech and language therapy was only available in English. No Welsh language support was available," he explains.

"I am bilingual but Welsh is what I speak day-to-day. I made progress with my English, but I struggled to speak Welsh with my family. Many words are more difficult to get around in Welsh, and the mouth and tongue movements are different, which is an extra challenge after a stroke.

"We practise as a family but it would have been so much more beneficial to have speech and language therapy in Welsh. I can see the improvements I have made, but it has been tough."

Earlier this year, the Stroke Association launched a new Welsh language policy which commits us to increasing the support we offer to those who are first language Welsh speakers. People affected by stroke can access support in Welsh through our Stroke Helpline and our My Stroke Guide online tool, and find Welsh language information on our website.



Find out about our Welsh language content and our work in Wales at stroke.org.uk/Wales.

We are also campaigning to improve treatment and services for stroke survivors in Wales.

Arnot found support through the Grŵp Paned a Sgwrs (Tea and Chat Group), a peer support chat group which was set up as part of our Community Steps project in Wales. The group gives him an opportunity to talk in Welsh to other people affected by stroke.

He says, "It is good to be able to speak to my peers in Welsh and have the opportunity to practise my daily Welsh conversation with other stroke survivors. The group

will hopefully help others who want to communicate more in Welsh with their recovery."

Katie Chappelle, our Associate Director for Wales, says offering support in Welsh plays an important role in helping people rebuild their lives after stroke.

"We believe everyone deserves to live the best life they can after stroke. For Welsh speakers, this means supporting you in your language of choice," she explains. "That's why we are working to increase and build on the support we can already offer in Welsh."



Free Will Scheme

Making a Will can seem daunting, not to mention costly. But anyone aged 60 and over and stroke survivors of any age can make or update a simple Will free of charge through our Free Will Scheme. By using our Scheme, you can be sure the people and causes closest to your heart will benefit in the way you'd like them to.

Leanne Gray, 32, from Bury St Edmunds, decided to make a Will after having a stroke at the age of 29.

"I was terrified," she recalls. "I remember having a conversation with my mum about my wishes should I not make it, as I was being prepared for emergency surgery.

After my stroke, I made a Will so if the worst should happen it will be clear what my family need to do."

Leanne chose to leave a gift in her Will to the Stroke Association.

"When I lost my grandfather to stroke in 2015, the charity gave me lots of information – it has been

close to my heart ever since," she explains. "The support provided by the Stroke Association is absolutely vital. I feel really proud to leave a legacy that contributes towards that."

"Legacy gifts make up a third of our entire income," says the Stroke Association's Head of Legacy Engagement, Azizah Aziz. "They have helped to fund major research and surgical breakthroughs, and played a vital role in the recoveries of hundreds of thousands of stroke survivors. We're incredibly grateful to everyone who leaves us a gift."

For Leanne, having her Will sorted means she can focus on making the best possible recovery after her stroke.

"I would really encourage anyone of any age to make a Will. I went to bed fit and well and woke up having a stroke, it really can happen to anyone at any time."



To find out more about making your Will with our Free Will Scheme please visit stroke.org.uk/free-will-scheme.



Emma McCann, Partner at Irwin Mitchell LLP, explains why Wills are so important.

"A lot of people don't realise that if you don't have a Will then the law decides who inherits your assets. This may not be who you would want it to be and the only way to prevent this from happening is to make a Will which clearly sets out your wishes.

"Homemade Wills tend to be fraught with issues and it can be expensive to sort any problems after death. A Will is a legal document and having a properly drafted Will made by a solicitor gives you peace of mind and may help to prevent disputes and unnecessary expense and upset following death."

Financial help while you're out of work

After a stroke, you may be unable to return to work or find that you need to take some time out to focus on your recovery. The financial impact can be stressful for you and your loved ones, but there may be benefits you can claim while you're unable to work.

Sick pay

Many employers have a company sick pay scheme, which entitles you to be paid while you're off work. The amount you'll receive and the length of time you'll receive this will depend upon your contract of employment, so if you're unsure about this ask your employer or check your contract.

If your company does not have a sick pay scheme, you may be able to get statutory sick pay (SSP) up to £96.35 a week for up to 28 weeks. This is paid by your employer in the same way as your normal wages.

To qualify for SSP, you have to earn an average of at least £120 per week. It's also available if you need to self-isolate for more than four days due to Covid-19. Check **gov.uk/statutory-sick-pay** for more information.

Employment and Support Allowance

If you don't qualify for SSP or if you've gone past the 28 weeks and you're unable to go back to work, you may be able to claim Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). This is normally paid as part of Universal Credit, but if you've paid enough National Insurance contributions you could be eligible for New Style ESA.

To be eligible for ESA, you must be under state pension age and not receiving SSP. When you apply for ESA you will normally need to complete a questionnaire and attend an assessment with a health professional.

If you're considered able to get back into work in the future, you'll be put into the work-related activity group and could receive up to £74.70 a week. Otherwise, you'll be put into the support group and could receive up to £114.10 a week.

Personal Independence Payment

Personal Independence Payment (PIP) is a benefit to help pay for some of the extra costs caused by long-term illness or disability. It is not means tested and it's possible to receive PIP even if you're still in work. It's possible to receive both ESA and PIP.

To qualify for PIP you must be aged between 16 and 64. You must have been experiencing difficulties with getting around or managing daily activities for three months and expect them to last for at least nine months. Find out more at gov.uk/pip.



You can find more information about benefits and financial support at stroke.org.uk/financial-support.

Puzzles

Puzzles can be a fun way to exercise your mind and improve concentration, understanding and memory.

Word search

R	T	S	A	R	P	F	J	X
E	I	S	L	O	R	A	C	H
E	N	V	B	O	F	Z	O	B
D	S	W	S	T	H	G	I	L
N	E	T	O	J	S	R	C	T
I	L	C	A	N	D	L	E	R
E	M	J	F	I	S	E	Y	E
R	M	I	N	C	E	P	I	E
H	T	A	E	R	W	E	F	O

Candle

Carols

Frost

Lights

Mince pie

Reindeer

Snow

Tinsel

Tree

Wreath

Across

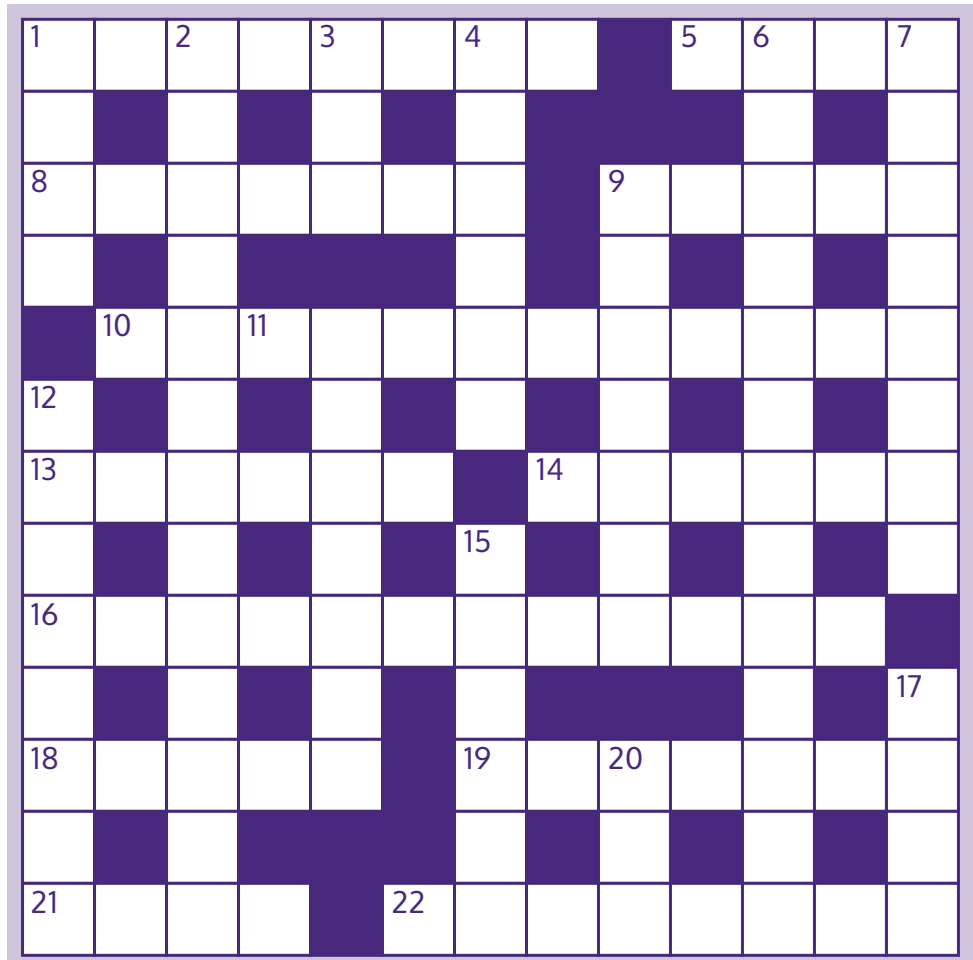
- 4 Duration (8)
- 5 Fine strand (4)
- 8 Piddling (7)
- 9 Suffuse (5)
- 10 Tight-fisted (12)
- 13 Cryptic verse (6)
- 14 Marksman (6)
- 16 Familiarity (12)
- 18 Rank (5)
- 19 Wifely (7)
- 21 Affaire d'honneur (4)
- 22 Cosmetic pencil (8)

Lottery

For your chance to win £1,000 every week, play the Stroke Association Charity Lottery. Find out more at lottery.stroke.org.uk.

Down

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 Overdue (4) | 9 Windfall (7) |
| 2 Rightfully (4,3,6) | 11 Rescue (7) |
| 3 Alpine runner (3) | 12 Put in order (8) |
| 4 Burning (6) | 15 Physical damage (6) |
| 6 Self-analysis (13) | 17 Make indistinct (4) |
| 7 Delight (8) | 20 Lubricate (3) |



With thanks to The Times/News Syndication who granted us rights to this crossword.

Rebuilding lives after stroke

Our charity supports people to live the best life they can after stroke. But rebuilding lives is a team effort and we need your help. A huge thank you to everyone who's gone the extra mile to fundraise, volunteer and campaign with us. Your support means we can reach even more people who need us.

Freddie, Felix and Oscar White

Brothers Freddie, Felix and Oscar from London raised £3,130 running the Beyond Badminton Trail in September. They're supporting us after their Granny White had a stroke in 2018.



Evan Lamond

Seven-year-old Evan from Stafford, whose Gran and Grandad have both had strokes, raised over £1,000 with an incredible 100-mile cycling challenge. "They are so brave and I want to help other people that have had strokes," he says.



Find out how you can get involved and support us on p50 or make a donation at stroke.org.uk/donating.

How does your donation help?



£10 could help us provide group support to stroke survivors, giving them confidence for their recovery.



£25 could help someone find hope through a call to our Helpline, giving them the emotional support to begin rebuilding their life.



£50 could help fund critical research that facilitates life-changing discoveries to help support people rebuilding life after stroke.



Keith Willey

Keith from Norfolk has raised over £800 in memory of his mum who passed away following a stroke in 2016. He ran four miles every four hours for 48 hours – that's almost two marathons in two days!



Volunteer spotlight

Mary Smith is a volunteer and Stroke Ambassador in Stockport.

"In 2007, aged 52, I had two brainstem strokes which left me partially sighted with poor balance and mobility. I was a deputy head and piano teacher but now faced endless, empty days. Eventually I realised I could be useful, albeit differently!

"I started volunteering on the stroke rehab ward at my local hospital. It's a weekly art group with an emphasis on expression and communication. The hospital gave me an award recently for 10 years of volunteering.

"I also sing with the North West Community Stroke Choir, which won a Life After Stroke Award in 2018."

To find out how you can volunteer, visit stroke.org.uk/yoursupport.

Join Team Stroke

Get involved and fundraise at home, or join us as we look forward to the return of face-to-face events:

Festive fundraising

Give the festive season some extra sparkle and help us give more people hope after stroke. You could have a Christmas jumper day or a family gaming challenge! Find lots of ideas at stroke.org.uk/festive.

Cardiff Half Marathon 27 March 2022

Join #TeamStroke for one of the largest and most exciting races in Wales. Get your trainers on and sign up at stroke.org.uk/Cardiff.



Brighton Marathon Weekend 10 April 2022

Join over 18,000 participants and 150,000 spectators for the Marathon, the BM10K or the BM Ride. Pick your challenge at stroke.org.uk/Brighton.

Edinburgh Marathon Festival 28-29 May 2022

With races including Junior, 5k, 10k, Half and Full Marathon, Scotland's biggest running festival has something for all levels of runners. Join us at stroke.org.uk/Edinburgh.

For more events and ways to get involved in our work, see stroke.org.uk.

Crossword solution

Across: 1 Lifespan; 5 Wisp; 8 Trivial; 9 Bathe; 10 Parsimonious; 13 Riddle; 14 Sniper; 16 Acquaintance; 18 Grade; 19 Uxorial; 21 Duel; 22 Eyeliner

Down: 1 Late; 2 Fair and square; 3 Ski; 4 Aflame; 6 Introspection; 7 Pleasure; 9 Bonanza; 11 Salvage; 12 Arranged; 15 Injury; 17 Blur; 20 Oil

R	T	S	A	R	P	F	J	X
E	I	S	L	O	R	A	C	H
E	N	V	B	O	F	Z	O	B
D	S	W	S	T	H	G	I	L
N	E	T	O	J	S	R	C	T
I	L	C	A	N	D	L	E	R
E	M	J	F	I	S	E	Y	E
R	M	I	N	C	E	P	I	E
H	T	A	E	R	W	E	F	O

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