



Winter 2022

Stroke News

For everyone affected by stroke

Stroke
Association

"Stroke has cost me a lot. But it won't stop me from living my life."

Lisa shares her story

This issue:

- Strength exercises you can do at home
- Getting mental health support after stroke
- Help us to raise awareness of atrial fibrillation

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Editor **Christine Webster**

Published by **Stroke Association**,
1 Sterling Business Park, Salthouse Road,
Brackmills, Northampton, NN4 7EX

Advertising **Square7 Media**.
Contact hello@square7media.co.uk

Volume 40.3 Winter 2022
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- Subscribe to three editions of Stroke News per year for free (online, in print or audio)
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Editor's letter

Just before her 28th birthday, our cover star, Lisa, had a stroke. It cost Lisa her ability to dance and her career as a choreographer. But with support and a lot of determination, she is finding other ways to creatively express herself and alternative ways to live her life. You can read her story on page 8.

In this issue, we're also focusing on tips and guidance on looking after your physical and mental health over the winter. On page 16, our Helpline Team share information on how to access mental health support. There are some strength exercises for you to try at home on pages 29-35.

We also have tips for reducing your heating costs and where to find help with energy bills on page 42.

I hope you enjoy this issue, and keep in touch with your stories, ideas and suggestions.



Christine Webster, Editor

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The Stroke Association is registered as a charity in England and Wales (No 211015) and in Scotland (SC037789).

Also registered in Northern Ireland (XT33805), Isle of Man (No 945) and Jersey (NPO 221).

Over to you

I was 47 when I had my strokes. I was doing the weekly shopping when I just collapsed.

It was a week later that I regained consciousness but couldn't move much. I had spent two days being treated for meningoencephalitis and placed in intensive care before an MRI and CT angiogram showed I had had strokes.

With the assistance of physiotherapy, along with other departments, over time

I re-learnt daily basics like swallowing, speaking, eating, drinking and movement again.

Nowadays, I require help from a mobility scooter, friends and family. Life isn't what it was but it would be a lot less without the time and effort given by the NHS and family.

I am truly thankful to everyone involved in my care.

Julie Green

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

Stroke changes everything. It can cost people their ability to move, communicate and work. For loved ones, it can mean suddenly finding themselves in the role of carer, costing their jobs or careers.

But we're here to help. Winter can be challenging for many people – especially with the cost of living crisis adding to the already substantial financial impact of stroke. If you, or someone you know, needs support with the emotional, practical and financial effects of stroke, call **0303 3033 100**, or visit **stroke.org.uk** and **mystrokeguide.com**.

We're also pushing for improvements to stroke treatment and care across the UK. For example, in Scotland we're working with stroke survivors and the Scottish Stroke Psychology

Forum, to raise awareness of the psychological effects of stroke and the impact they have. We're calling on the Scottish Government and health boards to commit to our recommendations to improve psychological care in stroke services. Find out more on page 18.

Stroke Prevention Day is on 12 January 2023. This year, we're raising awareness of atrial fibrillation, which can increase the risk of stroke. You can help us by encouraging your loved ones to check their pulses and sharing our information on social media. To get involved see page 38.

I also want to acknowledge the sad passing of our charity's Patron, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. We thank her for her years of service to us and the country.

Juliet Bouverie OBE

"Stroke has cost me a lot. But it won't stop me from living my life."

"I bent down to pick up a toy. As I got up, everything started spinning and I collapsed on my kid's bedroom floor."

In December 2000, just before her 28th birthday, dance teacher and childminder, Lisa Ogun, 49, was running an after-school club at home, when she had a stroke. Rushed to hospital, Lisa spent the next nine days in intensive care.


"I asked a nurse if I could quickly leave the hospital to check on my kids who had a dance show," recalls Lisa. "She said, 'Don't be silly, dear, you've had a stroke'. That was the first time I knew what had happened to me. I was devastated. I didn't really know

what a stroke was – I thought they only happened to older people."


Lisa's stroke was partly due to an atrial septal defect (ASD), a 'hole in the heart'. A year later, she had keyhole surgery to close the hole.

The stroke sent shockwaves through her life. "Before my stroke, I was a dynamo," says Lisa. "I was a choreographer, dancer, childminder, community representative and mother of two.

"Stroke left me with dystonia, a relative of Parkinson's disease, which causes muscle spasms and contractions in my left foot and arm. I can't walk without shoes or a splint. As soon as I get up, I go into spasm, so I start every day in pain."



"I didn't really know what a stroke was
– I thought they only happened to
older people."



"Stroke costs me money. If I'm out and it's too painful to walk, I often have to get a taxi, which is expensive. But that won't stop me from going out and living."

Lisa also gets 'spasm storms', which can last for weeks or even months. "The pain cuts through your sleep and your day. Meanwhile, you're still trying to live a life, work, be a mother, a friend, a lover. But the storm always eases. There's an end date – that's what gets me through.

"Since the stroke, I've had to find alternative ways of living. I lost my short term memory. We lived in a rainbow-coloured world for a long time because I wrote reminders for everything on Post-Its. Then

an occupational therapist gave me a big day-to-a-page diary so I started journaling and writing things down. I still do – it helps me with my memory.

"Stroke took away my ability to be a choreographer and a dancer, because my body wouldn't move in the way my brain was telling it to. It broke my heart, but it hasn't taken away my passion for dancing and the arts.

"I've found other ways to express myself creatively. I still



choreograph things for myself and do little routines with my daughter. I sidestepped into theatre because it's like dancing, but without the eight-count. I enjoy colouring and arts and crafts. I write too.

"I also love my balcony and gardening. You put something in the ground, you look after it, it grows. My flowers make me smile every day.

"Stroke costs me money. If I'm out and it's too painful to walk, I often have to get a taxi, which

is expensive. But that won't stop me from going out and living.

"In 2017, the dystonia was so bad I couldn't move. I was really depressed. My benefits stopped because I couldn't go out to post the form. I ran out of food. I was scared I was going to lose my home. I felt so ashamed that I didn't tell anyone.

"Finally, I reached out. Before I knew it, social services had reinstated my benefits and made my house better by installing grab rails to help me on the stairs and the toilet.



"If you've had a stroke, talk about it, don't hide. Talk to someone. Find the support that you need."

"The Stroke Association was there for me from the beginning. I read their booklets, which helped me to understand what had happened to me. They also introduced me to a stroke group in Hackney. It was really nice to talk to others who had been through what I'd been through. It made me feel less alone.

"Stroke cost me my relationships but it hasn't taken away my love for people. It's taken away my ability to go out when I want – now I've got to wait for a good day. But it hasn't taken away my passion to want to do more.

"For example, I wanted to give back, so I signed up to walk a marathon for the Stroke Association. I took it bit by bit over 16 days. Some days were tough, but I achieved my goal.

"Life is hard, but I'm resilient. And my brain finds ways to manage even though it's damaged. I won't lie down. My body might be a bit wonky. But it's still amazing. And inside this body, I continue to be Lisa."

If you or someone you know needs support, call our Stroke Helpline on **0303 3033 100** or visit **stroke.org.uk**.

Stroke changes everything.

We understand the huge impact that stroke can have. We are dedicated to helping stroke survivors of all ages and their families with the emotional, practical and financial cost of stroke.

If you can, please support others whose lives have been changed by stroke. You can make a donation by visiting **stroke.org.uk/donating**, by calling us on **0300 330 0740** or by completing the form below.

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Getting mental health support after stroke


A stroke is sudden and shocking. It can have a huge impact on the emotional wellbeing of stroke survivors and carers. When emotions are overwhelming it can be easy to think that things won't get better. But you're not on your own. Don't be afraid to ask for help.


Sarah Day from our Stroke Helpline shares some guidance on how to access support:

How can I get NHS support with my mental health?

A good place to start is speaking with your GP. They may be able to refer you to a mental health specialist, such as a psychologist or counsellor. Medication can often help too. It can be hard to discuss feelings, but try to be open and not down-play how you feel.

In some areas, you can refer yourself for talking therapies. You can find local services via [nhs.uk/service-search/mental-health/find-a-psychological-therapies-service](https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/mental-health/find-a-psychological-therapies-service).

 If you feel like harming yourself, or ending your life, call **999** or the Samaritans on **116 123**.

 **Where else can I go to get help?** Some charities offer free or low-cost talking therapies, including branches of Mind ([mind.org.uk](https://www.mind.org.uk)), Rethink Mental Illness ([rethink.org](https://www.rethink.org)), Turning Point ([turning-point.co.uk](https://www.turning-point.co.uk)) and Mental Health Matters ([mhm.org.uk](https://www.mhm.org.uk)).

Alternatively, you can pay for private therapy. You can use websites such as [counselling-directory.org.uk](https://www.counselling-directory.org.uk) or [bacp.co.uk/search/Therapists](https://www.bacp.co.uk/search/Therapists) to find registered professionals.



Private therapy can be rewarding but expensive, so check charges and ask about discounts that might apply.

What support can the Stroke Association offer?

Our Here For You telephone service connects stroke survivors and carers to trained volunteers, who can help you to understand and cope with the impact of stroke. Go to **stroke.org.uk/HereForYou** or call us on the Helpline to sign up.

Many people also find our support groups helpful, because you can talk to others who know what you're going through. We have groups all around the UK, which offer friendship, advice and support (**stroke.org.uk/groups**).

You can also chat to other stroke survivors and carers 24/7 via our online community at **mystrokeguide.com**. We've also just launched a new Online Stroke Activities Hub at **stroke.org.uk/activitieshub**, where you can meet others remotely and take part in activities, talks and quizzes as well as support sessions.



For information about emotional changes after stroke and getting help, contact our Stroke Helpline on **0303 3033 100** or **helpline@stroke.org.uk**. You can also download our 'Emotional changes after stroke' guide from **stroke.org.uk/emotions** or call **0300 3300 740** for a printed copy.

Improving psychological support in Scotland

Most stroke survivors will experience some kind of emotional or psychological change afterwards. But as these effects are hidden, people don't always receive the help they need.

We're working with stroke survivors, the Scottish Stroke Psychology Forum, and the Scottish Government to improve support for people with emotional and psychological problems after stroke.

Paula, 41, from Glasgow, struggled with extreme anxiety following a stroke in October 2021.

"My emotions were uncontrollable at times," say Paula. "I would cry for no reason, and although I'd struggled with anxiety before, this

was different and scarier. I was terrified to leave the house. It was overwhelming and I needed help.

"The staff in the hospital ward were empathetic and helped me to understand the changes I was going through. I was put on a waiting list for psychological support and referred to a mental health nurse. The nurse called twice and just listened to me, which is what I needed most."

Paula's family and friends were also a fantastic support. "Having someone there, even if we didn't talk, was a comfort," says Paula. "Someone to tell me I was doing well, or to remind me to eat, was reassuring – I felt less alone."

With their help, and her own determination, Paula is working through her anxiety. She has good and bad days, but has gradually



Join our Campaigns Network to help us to improve stroke support for people affected by stroke across the UK. Sign up at stroke.org.uk/campaigns.

re-built her confidence enough to return to work, meet friends and do some hobbies again.

"I took little steps when I felt ready, rather than dwelling on what I couldn't do. The first time I walked my dog on my own after the stroke was a huge step for me. Crafting helped me focus on something other than anxiety. And I talked about my worries, because once they're out of my head, they seem smaller.

"As things improved, I came off the psychological support waiting list,

because I thought someone worse off than me would benefit from it."

Paula is helping us to raise awareness and encourage Scotland's health boards to deliver on our recommendations for improving support services.

"Lots of stroke survivors don't get the support I did, in hospital or at home," says Paula. "I want people to understand the impact of hidden effects, like anxiety, and for Scotland's health boards to act to ensure that people get the mental health support they need."

Getting back on track

Steve Davies had two strokes in January 2019 when he was just 35. Now he's using his passion for racing cars to raise awareness of stroke and money to help other stroke survivors.

"I had a week of headaches, then woke one night feeling sick and in excruciating pain," remembers Steve.

"After the strokes, I had left-sided weakness and couldn't speak for a while. My moods went up and down and I had continual headaches, which I still get now.

"But there's so much I haven't done, and I could have lost everything, so I thought 'Right, let's do what I want to do in life'.

"I'd never raced before, but had always wanted to, so I bought a Ginetta G40 car. I decided to race and raise money for the Stroke Association, who supported me after my stroke."

Steve asked his doctor and the DVLA for advice about driving after stroke, but it took him a few

months to feel well, confident and safe enough to get back behind the wheel.

"I saw the Ginetta sat in the garage and decided to book a track session. It was hard work. My brain wasn't wired properly, so instead of turning left, I'd turn right, which got us into some daunting situations. But just getting in the car felt like a huge achievement, so I kept practising until I got my racing licence.

"Silverstone was my first race. I was last but I was first in my head - it was incredible."

Since then, Steve's taken part in races all over the country, raising over £10,000.

We were the Goodwood Group's charity of the year 2022, so Steve was also invited to one of their



motor events. "I brought my Ginetta with the Stroke Association logo on the side. I drove a few laps of the track and it was a fantastic day – we raised about £800.

"I think of it as my job to raise money for the Stroke Association now, as not

everyone's as lucky as I've been. I also want people to know that there is life after stroke. It can get lonely in your own head, so positivity and setting goals are big things for me. I know not everyone can just buy a car, but have something to aim for and be determined to do it, even if it takes time to get there."



Download our 'Driving after stroke' guide at stroke.org.uk/driving or call **0300 3300 740** to get a printed copy.

Find out more about fundraising for us at stroke.org.uk/fundraising.

After Dad's stroke

Stroke changes lives in an instant and can have a huge impact on family and friends too. When Sophie and Jem Allport's dad, Patrick, had a severe haemorrhagic stroke (a bleed in his brain), their world turned upside down.

"Dad was our friend as much as he was our father," says Jem. "Nothing was ever too much trouble and we enjoyed his company as much as (I hope) he enjoyed ours!"

"He was one of the fittest 59-year-olds we knew. He was always an early riser and would get up, shower and then bring Mum a cup of tea in bed.

"His stroke in March 2004 was a bolt out of the blue. Early one morning, Mum found him collapsed on the kitchen floor.

"He was in intensive care for four months and then the stroke unit at Lincoln County Hospital. He lost the use of his left arm and had limited use of his left leg. His speech and personality were also affected.

"Seeing him in hospital after his stroke was traumatic. He went from playing sports regularly, to being bedridden and unable to walk or talk. It was harrowing.

"Mentally he was never the same again. We always say it was like having two fathers. He'd get infections that would change his personality overnight. It was really tough to witness and we feel so terrible for him that he had to endure it.

"We had to make new relationships, roles and dynamics within our family. Mum became Dad's carer and the pressure that put on her was immense. Luckily, our parents have an amazing group of friends who rallied round. We also spoke to the Stroke Association who gave us help and advice.



If you care for a stroke survivor and need more support, contact our Helpline on **0303 3033 100** or visit **stroke.org.uk/carer**.

"Dad was a survivor and determined to be as independent as he could be. He had lots of physiotherapy and worked hard to walk with the assistance of a stick. He adapted to only being able to use his right arm – he was determined to play golf single handedly! Eventually he managed to drive again with an adapted car."

Sadly, Patrick passed away in 2008.

Sophie and Jem now run their own business, homeware and lifestyle brand, Sophie Allport. In their dad's memory, they've partnered

with us to raise funds for stroke survivors and their families. "The Stroke Association looked after our father so well, and we wanted to be able to do something in return."

Sophie Allport is selling Christmas cards to support the Stroke Association this winter. They're also offering Stroke News readers 15% off until 6 February 2023. Visit **sophieallport.com** and use code SOPHIE-15. Terms and conditions apply*.

*Promotions aren't valid on made to measure curtains and blinds, service charges, gift vouchers or sale items and can't be used in conjunction with any other offer.

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Move to your mood

Getting active when recovering from a stroke can be challenging – how you feel can change from day to day. But, even small amounts of activity can help you to regain mobility, enjoy the little things in life and improve your mental health wellbeing.

Ann Kinnish had a stroke in 2021, when she was 49. "My symptoms came on gradually over a few days," says Ann. "I felt nauseous, dizzy and I had problems with my vision. I called the GP who told me to go straight to A&E.

"I lost the use of my left side, had balance and vision problems, and extreme fatigue. I also lost my appetite and my hearing became really sensitive.

"Before my stroke, I was mega busy. I did a full time job and lots of volunteering. I was also a runner. Losing all of that in an instant was very hard."

Ann found that getting moving again was central to her recovery.

She signed up to My Stroke Guide and decided to try our four-week stroke exercise programme in partnership with A Stroke of Luck.

"I was having physio every few weeks, but I wanted something to plug the gaps. The exercise video were split into different ability levels, so I was able to find the level that suited my physical capability.

"I couldn't lift my arm very well and found the arm strength exercises challenging, but I did what I could. If I only did five, next time I'd try six. It's important to keep going - some days I felt like I hadn't progressed for ages and then suddenly I'd make a leap forward. Now I have full use of my arm back.

"The videos also helped my mental health as they pushed me to do other things to get my life back a bit quicker. I've slowly introduced more activity into my day, like housework, walking in my garden or using my exercise peddler. But I also try to take an hour every day to sit and do nothing to help with the fatigue."

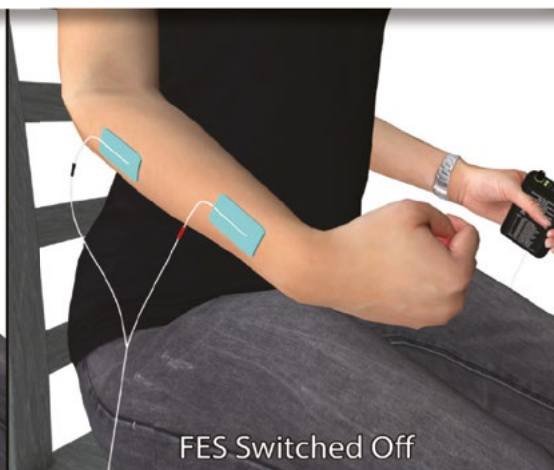
"I also found writing poetry therapeutic. It helped me when I was struggling to find the right words or if I was trying to explain how I felt to family and friends. And jigsaw puzzles were a life saver!"

"I know that I am a long way off running again, but I still have hope that one day, I will be able to. I can see that 5K run in the distance."



We're part of the 'We Are Undefeatable' campaign to inspire people with long-term health conditions to find ways to be active that work for them. For ideas and inspiration, visit weareundefeatable.co.uk.

Visit mystrokeguide.com/exercises, and see pages 29 to 35 to try our latest exercise programme.



Make the most out of life

to become or stay active while living with the effects of a stroke

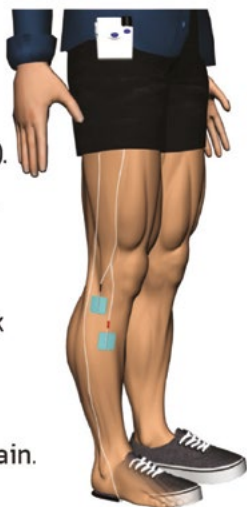
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There are many elements which can help to achieve this from physiotherapy to exercise, including Functional Electrical Stimulation (FES).

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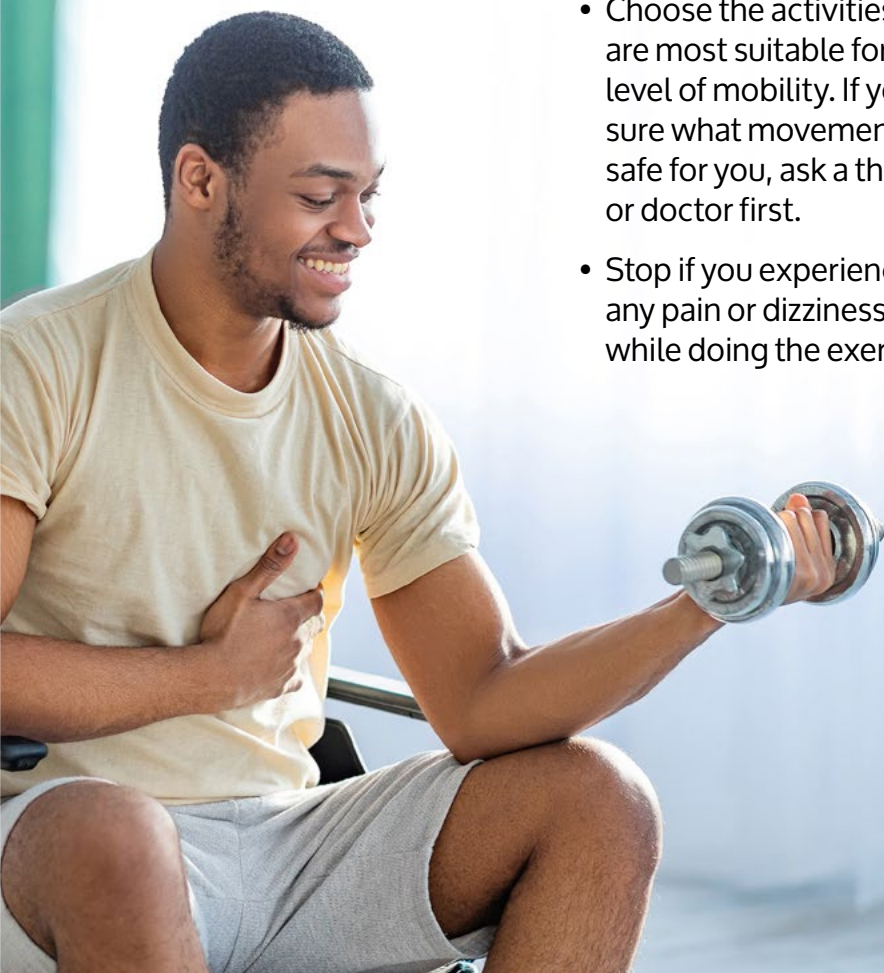
Strength exercises

Building strength is important after a stroke. It can help to improve your mobility, balance and make it easier to do everyday things, like climbing stairs and picking up your shopping.

Physiotherapists Mark Watterson and Nicole Lavin, from A Stroke of Luck, share some strength exercises you can try at home.

Before you start:

- Choose the activities that are most suitable for your level of mobility. If you aren't sure what movements are safe for you, ask a therapist or doctor first.
- Stop if you experience any pain or dizziness while doing the exercises.



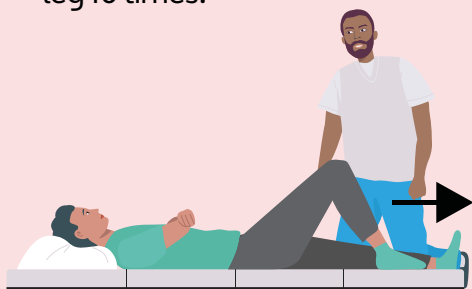
If you have limited mobility or use a wheelchair:



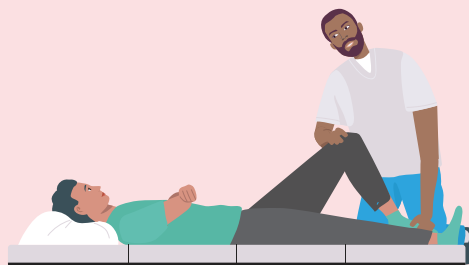
Ask a carer or family member to support you with these exercises.

Exercise 1

- Lie on your back with a pillow under your head and weaker arm.
- Bend both knees so your feet are flat. Your carer can help you to move your weaker leg.
- Straighten your stronger leg and return it to the start position 10 times.
- Repeat with your weaker leg 10 times.
- Your carer can help by placing their hand under your knee and supporting your foot. Try to push your carers hand away with your weaker foot as you straighten your leg.
- Tighten your stomach muscles during this exercise.



Stronger side



Weaker side

Exercise 2

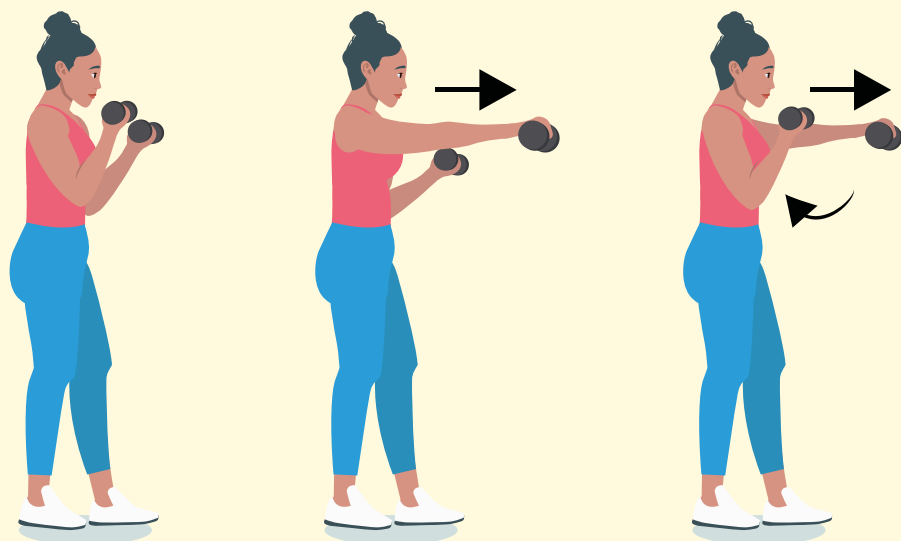
- Sit upright in your wheelchair or seat with your back off the chair. If this is difficult, place a pillow behind your back.
- Your carer can support your weaker arm to allow you to sit more centrally.
- Hold a weighted object, such as a dumbbell, can or bottle of water in your stronger hand.
- Bend your elbow, then raise your arm above your head and lower it again.
- Repeat 10 times.
- Rest and repeat for two sets.
- To progress, use heavier weights.



If you have some mobility but need walking aids or support:

Exercise 1

- Stand holding a weight (such as a dumbbell or can) in each hand. Spread your weight evenly through both legs.
- Bring your hands up to your chest.
- Punch your hands alternately out in front of you.
- Don't worry if you can't hold the weight with your weaker hand or keep your arms at chest height, just do what you can and go at your own pace.
- Repeat 15 times.
- Rest, then do two more sets.
- To progress, use heavier weights.

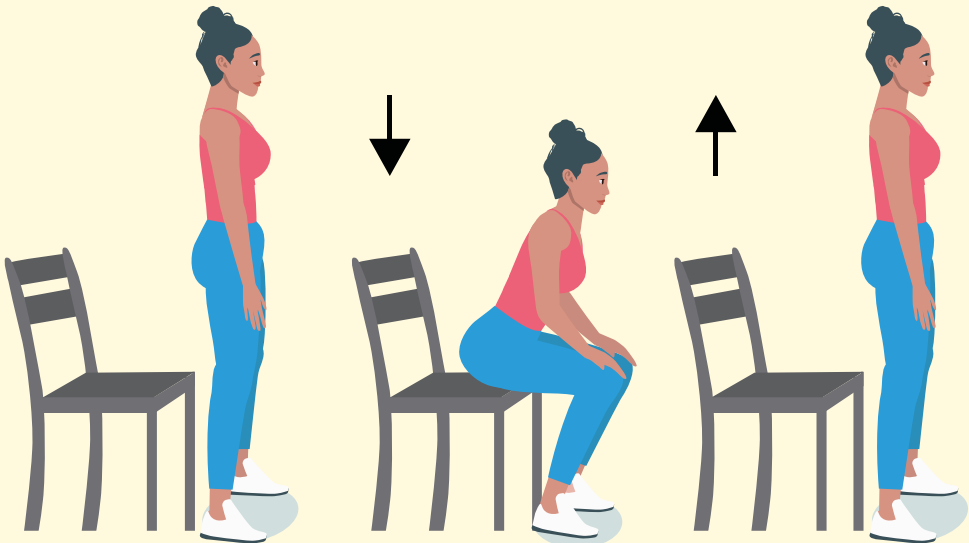




If you feel unsteady standing up, ask a carer or family member to support you.

Exercise 2

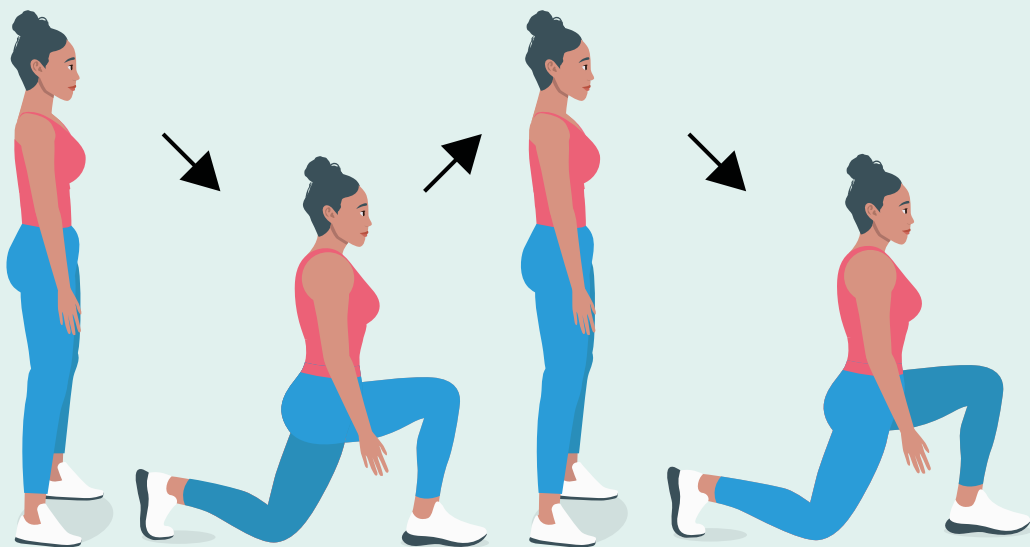
- Stand in front of a chair with your feet hip width apart
- Spread your weight evenly through both legs.
- Sit down slowly for a count of three.
- As your bottom touches the chair, stand back up again.
- Repeat 10 times.
- Rest, then do another set.
- If you get tired, slide your hands along your thighs to balance yourself.



If you can move around independently without aids or support:

Exercise 1

- Stand up straight.
- Step and bend your knee to lunge forward with your stronger leg.
- Return to standing and repeat with your weaker leg.
- Use a chair or counter top for support if needed.
- Repeat 10 times.
- Rest, then do another set.

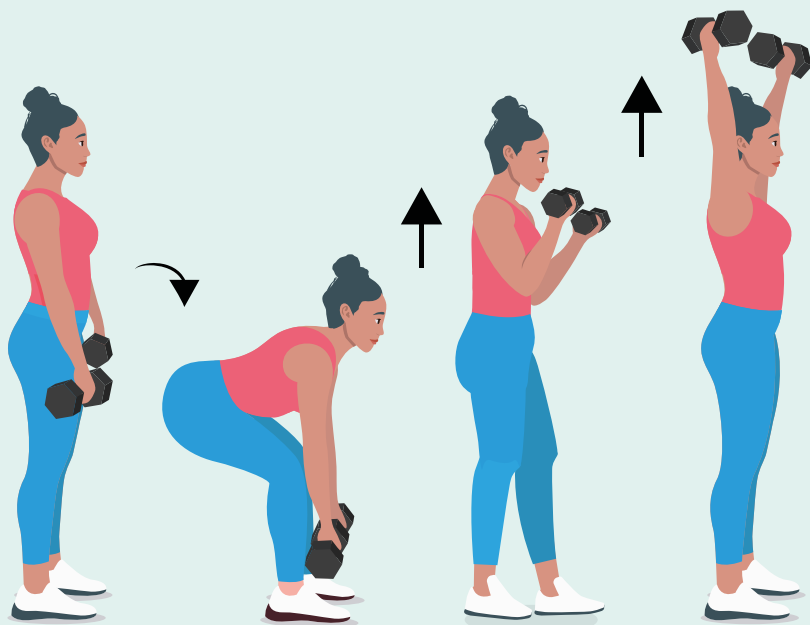


Exercise 2

- Holding a weight in each hand, stand up straight with your arms by your sides and your feet shoulder width apart.
 - Squat down, keeping your back straight.
 - When the weights touch the floor, stand back up.
 - Bend your elbows and raise the weights to shoulder height.
 - Press the weights up above your head and back down. Stop if this hurts.
 - Return to your starting position.
- Repeat 10 times.
 - Rest, then do another set.
 - To progress, use heavier weights.



Visit mystrokeguide.com/exercises to follow our stroke-specific exercise programmes. For more information about getting active after a stroke, download our guide from stroke.org.uk/active. Or order it in print by calling **0300 3300 740**.



Getting stroke patients the

During a stroke, thousands of brain cells die every second and emergency treatments must be given within a short time window. The faster ambulance services can get people to hospital for specialist medical attention, the better their chance of rebuilding their lives after stroke.

Dr Graham McClelland is the first research paramedic funded by the Stroke Association and one of very few in the UK. In 2015-2018, we funded him through his Postgraduate Fellowship award at Newcastle University. In 2020, Graham was awarded a Stroke Association Postdoctoral Fellowship, and is now looking to improve care in the crucial minutes and hours after a stroke.

What's your motivation for doing this research?

I feel that prehospital stroke care has not moved on in the same way that other areas of prehospital care have. While paramedics only see a stroke patient for a short period of time, the decisions and actions they make influence what happens next and ultimately the patient's outcome.

As emergency stroke treatment is so time-dependent, getting the prehospital care right is important. This is something I am well placed to study and advocate for with my paramedic background.

Why do we need this research?

I'm focusing on the time paramedics spend with stroke patients. As emergency stroke treatments must be given within a short time window, it's vital that the time between calling for help and getting to the right hospital is as quick as possible. In England, the amount of time paramedics spend with a stroke patient before they arrive at hospital is increasing, despite no real change in practice. We're trying to understand why this is and what we can do about it.

emergency care they need

I'm also looking at how video calling can be used to improve emergency stroke care.

Q What are your aims?

I want to improve prehospital stroke care and draw attention to the importance of getting it right. I hope we can reduce the time paramedics spend with stroke patients, which will benefit the patient and the ambulance service.

Q How are you involving people affected by stroke?

They've helped guide my research throughout the project so far. Stroke survivors and carers help keep me focused on the problem at hand, identify which bits are most important and show me where there are more opportunities to involve people.

Q What benefits do you hope this research will have?

I hope my research will help to improve emergency care for suspected stroke patients and communication between emergency services and stroke specialists in hospitals, helping to reduce death and disability caused by stroke.



Visit **stroke.org.uk/research** to find out more about our research. You can support stroke research by donating what you can at **stroke.org.uk/donating** or by calling **0300 330 0740**.

Understanding atrial fibrillation

Atrial fibrillation (also known as AF) is a common problem that causes your heart to beat with an irregular rhythm. AF can increase your risk of a serious stroke. However, as it's often symptomless, many people don't know they have AF, unless they've had a routine medical check-up, or they've had a stroke.

Q Why does AF cause stroke?

If your heart beats with an irregular rhythm, it won't empty all of the blood out of its chambers with every beat. This leftover blood can form clots, which travel from your heart to your brain, blocking off blood flow and causing a stroke.

Q How common is this?

AF can happen to anyone of any age. There are around 1.5 million people diagnosed with AF in the UK, and there could be another half a million people living with AF who don't know they have

it. One in every five strokes are linked to atrial fibrillation, so it's a really common cause of stroke.

Q How do I know if I have AF?

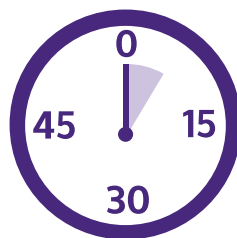
If you've had a stroke, you should have been tested for AF while you were in hospital. Usually this is done with an ECG. If you haven't had a stroke or an AF check, ask a healthcare professional to check your pulse next time you have an appointment, as this can help to catch irregularities. You can also check your pulse at home (see opposite). If you have a smart watch, you can use this to keep an eye on your pulse too.

Q How can I reduce my risk of stroke with AF?

If you have AF, treatments including taking blood thinning medications can reduce your risk of stroke. It's really important that you take your medication regularly to keep your chances of stroke low.

How to test for AF at home:

- Sit down and make yourself comfortable.
- Hold out one of your hands with your palm facing upwards.
- Place the first two fingers of your other hand on the inside of your wrist, at the base of your thumb and press lightly. You should feel your pulse beating
- Count your pulse for 30 seconds.
- Your pulse should beat with a regular rhythm. If the rhythm isn't regular, you might have AF (although there are other causes of an irregular heartbeat that are nothing to worry about).
- If you detect an irregular pulse, go to **stroke.org.uk/SPD23** for next steps. Or call our Stroke Helpline.



To find out more about AF, visit **stroke.org.uk/AF** or call **0303 3033 100**.

Stroke Prevention Day is on 12 January 2023. You can help stop stroke by encouraging your loved ones to check their pulse and by watching and sharing our 'How to check your pulse' video (**stroke.org.uk/pulse**) on social media. For more information, visit **stroke.org.uk/SPD23** or call **0300 3300 740**.

Eating well after a stroke

It's important to have a healthy, balanced diet to support your recovery after a stroke.

Even making small changes to what you eat can help you to stay at a healthy weight, control diabetes and lower your blood pressure and cholesterol, reducing your risk of another stroke.

Kelly Fortune, Nutritionist for our partner, Wiltshire Farm Foods, shares some tips for eating a balanced diet.

✓ **Monitor your saturated fat intake.** Saturated fat increases your blood cholesterol levels. Choose foods that have a green or amber traffic light for saturated fat on their label. Rather than full fat, opt for lower fat options in products such as yoghurts and milk.

✓ **Limit your salt intake to no more than 6g per day.** Eating too much salt can increase your blood pressure and risk of stroke. Over three quarters of the salt we eat is already in the food we have bought, so try not to add extra salt to your meals during cooking or at the table. Try and select foods that have a green or amber traffic light for salt on their food label.

✓ **Increase your fruit and vegetable intake.** Try to base at least a third of each meal on fruit and vegetables. You may have heard the saying, 'Eat a rainbow', which means eating a wide range of fruit and vegetables to get the best nutritional benefits that the different colours can provide.



✓ **Choose wholegrain where you can.** Ensure a third of your diet is made up of starchy foods, such as bread, pasta and potatoes.

✓ **Cut down on alcohol.** Drinking too much alcohol can raise your blood pressure. Visit **drinkaware.co.uk** for the government guidelines on safe levels of drinking, tools to help you calculate your units and advice on how to reduce or stop drinking.



For more information about healthy eating and stroke, visit **stroke.org.uk/healthyeating** or call our Helpline on **0303 3033 100**.

Wiltshire Farm Foods offer a variety of healthy meals that can be delivered straight to your door, including a softer food range for people with swallowing problems. Visit **wiltshirefarmfoods.com** to find out more. Use SN5OFF for £5 off your first order of £24.99.*

Trouble swallowing?

Speak to your speech and language therapist to see if a texture modified meal might be the best option for you.

*Must be a new customer. Offer expires 31 December 2022.

Make your money go further heating your home

If you have a health condition like stroke, it's important to keep yourself and your home warm to help you stay well. But with soaring energy prices on top of the financial pressures stroke causes, many stroke survivors and their families are struggling to afford their heating.

It's not advisable to turn your heating off altogether, as the cold and damp can make your health worse. But you may be able to get financial help with your bills.

- **Find out if you're eligible for benefits** – If you receive means tested, disability or pension-related benefits, you'll automatically get an extra cost of living payment ([helpforhouseholds.campaign.gov.uk](https://www.helpforhouseholds.campaign.gov.uk)). Speak to your local Citizens Advice,

or visit [gov.uk/benefits-calculators](https://www.gov.uk/benefits-calculators) to find out more.

- **Speak to your energy company** – Many providers offer support to people who are struggling to pay their bills. Contact your supplier to find out if they can help you.
- **Cost of living** – If you are experiencing financial hardship, you may be able to get help from your local council. Contact them directly to find out what help is available in your local area.

If you're not eligible for financial support, here are some practical tips to help reduce heating costs, without compromising your health.

- **Lower your thermostat** – According to the Energy Saving Trust, turning your thermostat

er:



down by one degree can save around £145 annually. Although, if you're over 65 or have a health condition, 18°C is generally as low as you should go.

- **Set your timer** – If you have a gas boiler, it's cheaper to set your heating to come on only when needed, rather than keeping it on low all day. Set it to switch on just before you get up and turn off after you've gone to bed or are out of the house.
- **Make your radiators more efficient** – Check for cold spots and bleed them if needed. Move furniture away from radiators to allow the warm air to circulate better.
- **Keep warm air in** – Fit draft-proofing strips to your windows and doors, block unused chimneys, add rugs and close curtains to stop warm air from escaping.
- **Use an electric or insulating blanket** – Electric blankets are much cheaper to run than central heating. Weighted or fleece blankets are good insulators and can help keep you warm while you're in bed or sat still.
- **Visit a warm bank** – These are heated communal places, like libraries and churches, where you can go if you can't heat your home. Contact your council or visit warmwelcome.uk to find one near you.



For more help, visit stroke.org.uk/financial-support, or contact us on **0303 3033 100** or helpline@stroke.org.uk.

Puzzles

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

Word search

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

Boots

Cardigan

Coat

Earmuffs

Fleece

Gloves

Hat

Jacket

Scarf

Thermals

Across

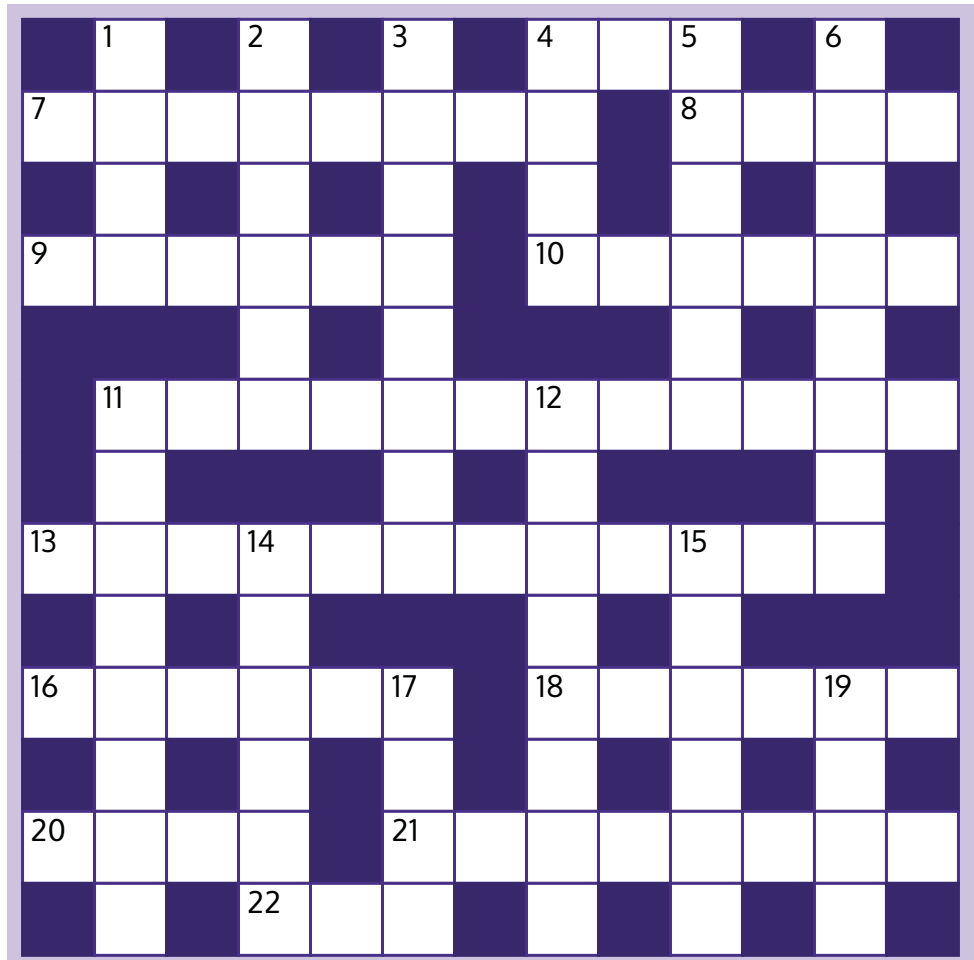
- 2 Tease (3)
- 7 Bye (6-2)
- 8 Mischievous (4)
- 9 Large jug (6)
- 10 Reshape (6)
- 11 Aggressively difficult (6-6)
- 13 Railway vehicles (7,5)
- 16 Put an end to (6)
- 18 Apprehensive (6)
- 20 Muslim mystic (4)
- 21 Recant (8)
- 22 Everyone (3)

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 Be very hot (4) | 11 Literary group (4,4) |
| 2 Slowly, in music (6) | 12 Biting bug (8) |
| 3 Curbed (6,2) | 14 Riga's country (6) |
| 4 Space (4) | 15 Exaggerate (6) |
| 5 Cultivated plot (6) | 17 Shout (4) |
| 6 Conservationist, colloquially (8) | 19 Examine (4) |



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

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Rebuilding lives after stro

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.



Callum Chadwick

Congratulations to stroke survivor, Callum Chadwick, who had the honour of being a Baton Bearer for the Commonwealth Games in July, in recognition of his amazing fundraising achievements. Callum had a stroke in 2020, when he was only 20. He recently raised over £5,000 by taking on the Coast to Coast Cycling Challenge.

Ann and Tony Giles

Well done to Ann and Tony, who completed the 177 mile Offa's Dyke trail from Chepstow to Prestatyn in May. Their amazing adventure raised over £1,300 for stroke survivors like their son-in-law, who had a stroke, aged just 37.



Find out what events we've got coming up on page 50 or make a donation at stroke.org.uk/donating.

How does your donation help?



£10 could support our Helpline to answer a call from someone who urgently needs support after a life-changing stroke.



£25 could be part of a hardship grant for a stroke survivor who is struggling to pay for basics like food and clothing.



£50 could help us be there for children and families through our Childhood Stroke Support.



JBA Concerts

A big thank you to JBA Concerts who have helped us to raise over £6,000 at their concerts at Cadogan Hall in London over the last few years. A special thank you to Jonathan Boddy, the team at Cadogan, the concert guests and our amazing volunteers for their incredible support.



Volunteer spotlight

Dawn Cooper gives her time to support Stroke Association fundraisers at events. She recently volunteered at the Bath Half Marathon in October, helping to set up our cheer point and cheering on all our runners along the route to give them a boost.

"My mum died suddenly from a stroke three years ago, so I wanted to do something to support the Stroke Association," says Dawn.

"I had a great time and would love to volunteer again in the future. I'd recommend it – it's a great way to meet new people and make friends, while supporting a great cause."

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

Join Team Stroke

Get involved and fundraise at home, or join us in person as more exciting face-to-face events return:

Stride for Stroke

Looking for ways to get or stay active this winter? Challenge yourself to complete 1.3 million steps, one for every stroke survivor in the UK, in 130 days while raising vital funds. Sign up at stroke.org.uk/stride23.

Great North Run 10 September 2023

Join us for the world's biggest half marathon and we'll support you every step of the way. Sign up at stroke.org.uk/GNR23.

Skip for Stroke February

Get ready for the return of Skip for Stroke, where you can join hundreds of supporters in skipping for 15 minutes every day in February. Keep an eye on our Facebook challenges page at stroke.org.uk/Fb-fundraising - for more exciting details coming soon!



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

Crossword solution

Across: 4 Rag, 7 Toodle-oo, 8 Arch, 9 Flagon, 10 Modify, 11 Bloody-minded, 13 Rolling stock, 16 Scotch, 18 Uneasy, 20 Sufi, 21 Withdraw, 22 All

Down: 1 Boil, 2 Adagio, 3 Reined in, 4 Room, 5 Garden, 6 Ecofreak, 11 Book club, 12 Mosquito, 14 Latvia, 15 Overdo, 17 Howl, 19 Scan



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