

Spring 2021

Stroke News

For everyone affected by stroke

Stroke

Association

"Research is vital to reduce deaths and improve recoveries."

Ann and Dr Adrian on saving stroke research

This issue:

- Balance exercises to try at home
- Our new research into stroke and Covid-19
- Managing money on someone's behalf



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Contact us on **01604 687 721**, email strokenews@stroke.org.uk or visit stroke.org.uk/strokenews to:

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Editor's letter

Stroke research helps to save and rebuild lives. But the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic has put many vital projects under threat.

Stroke survivor Ann Bamford is chair of a patient group working with researcher and cover star, Dr Adrian Parry-Jones. On page 8, they talk about the importance of stroke research and the challenges it faces.

This issue, we also focus on your wellbeing, with tips for memory and concentration problems (page 14), balance exercises to try at home (page 22), and ways to reduce your stroke risk (page 38).

Thank you to everyone who filled in our reader survey in the winter 2020 issue. Your feedback

will help us to make sure Stroke News is right for you.

Finally, I'm going on maternity leave in April, so this is my last issue for a little while. But the magazine will continue in safe hands while I'm away. Please keep sending in your stories – we love hearing from you.

I hope you enjoy this edition and I'll see you soon!



Christine Webster, Editor

Every effort has been made to ensure that the information provided in this magazine is accurate, but we cannot guarantee accuracy and the information provided does not constitute legal or other professional advice. Opinions expressed in this magazine are not always to be taken as the opinions of the Stroke Association. Advertisements, products or services listed are not necessarily recommended by the Stroke Association. Stroke News is printed on paper from sustainable sources.

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Over to you

My stroke was in June 2018. I woke and found my right leg a bit numb. I felt strange so phoned my daughter. She came over, took one look at me and called an ambulance.

I've always been active and independent. At 85, I played table tennis, enjoyed gardening and travelling the world.

I had to change my life around and teach my right hand, arm and leg to work again. I had to give up driving, but spend the insurance on taxis instead.

It's hard and I have days when I wonder if it's worth trying, but soon get into more positive mood.

You can have a good cry on a bad day, only to dry your eyes, get up and try again.

So keep trying. If an old lady can manage to achieve some progress, look after the daily chores and stay sane, you too can hope and try your best.

Sonia P

Shared on My Stroke Guide

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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Stroke can change your life in an instant, but recovery is possible. My Stroke Guide gives you access to trusted support and information 24/7, and connects you to our online community, to find out how others manage their recovery.

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Stroke
Association



From our Chief Executive

Despite the challenges of the past year, we're starting to see signs of hope.

We're optimistic that as the Covid-19 vaccine programme progresses, pressures on health and care services will start to ease. However, we know that many stroke survivors still aren't getting the treatment and care they need, so we will continue pushing to get stroke recoveries back on track.

Thank you to everyone who signed our Open Letter at the end of last year, calling on governments and health services to act now to ensure people can rebuild their lives after stroke. With the elections coming up in Scotland and Wales, we're also working with stroke survivors and carers to ask parliamentary candidates to commit to progressing promised stroke reforms. Find out how you can get involved on page 19.

Although the pandemic has halved our research budget, we're still aiming to fund great research



projects in the future. We're excited to be funding two new studies to understand the links between stroke and Covid-19. You can find out more about these projects on page 32.

We don't yet know what the next few months will bring, but we'll be here to support you. If you or someone close to you needs information or guidance on the physical, emotional and practical effects of stroke, or wants to connect with others affected by stroke (see page 28), we can help. Contact our Stroke Helpline on **0303 3033 100** or visit stroke.org.uk and mystrokeguide.com.

Juliet Bouverie

Rebuilding lives through stroke research

"Stroke affects every area of your life, and that of your family. Research is the only way to reduce deaths, improve recovery outcomes and quality of life."



We want to help as many people as possible live the best lives they can. One of the key ways we do this is

by funding research into more effective treatments, rehabilitation and after-stroke care.

Since her stroke in 2011, Ann Bamford has taken part in several of our projects and patient involvement groups and is as passionate about stroke research as we are. She works with researchers, including

Dr Adrian Parry-Jones, to ensure that people affected by stroke are involved in developing projects with the potential to save and rebuild lives.

Ann first met Adrian after she had a haemorrhagic stroke (bleed in

her brain). "I was at the dentist and suddenly felt like my head had exploded," remembers Ann. "Dr Parry-Jones was one of the amazing team who treated me in hospital. I felt very safe in his care. He helped me understand what was happening to me."

Around 1 in 10 strokes are caused by a haemorrhage. Unfortunately, because this type of stroke is less common and more severe than those caused by a blockage (ischaemic stroke), research into its treatment has fallen behind that of ischaemic stroke.





Find out how research, like Dr Adrian's work, helps to rebuild lives at stroke.org.uk/vitalresearch. You can also support us and help to save stroke research by donating what you can on stroke.org.uk/donating, by calling **0300 330 0740** or completing the form on page 49.

Recognising this significant gap in our knowledge, we fund researchers like Adrian to investigate new emergency treatments for haemorrhagic stroke.

"After any injury, you get inflammation – it's the body's way of trying to contain the injury," says Adrian. "But when this happens in the brain after a stroke, it makes things worse. However, studies show that blocking inflammation can improve recovery.

"We wanted to test to see if anti-inflammatory drugs could reduce swelling in the brains of haemorrhagic stroke patients. But just as we were beginning clinical trials, the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic stopped our work."

The pandemic has hit stroke research hard. A severe drop in charitable income has halved our research budget. This combined with social distancing and researchers returning to frontline NHS work has meant that almost

three-quarters of the stroke research projects we fund have had to pause.

"Stroke Association funding is critical to my work," says Adrian. "The pandemic has held us back. This is frustrating as every delay means more lives are being destroyed and lost."

Ann agrees. "The charity's support for research is vital, and has been a constant in my life since my stroke.

"I wasn't able to return to my job, but helping Stroke Association researchers gave me confidence and a purpose.

"I know I'm lucky to be alive. But I cannot begin to describe the long, hard slog of trying to rebuild your life following stroke.

"I still struggle with cognitive impairments. I can't always think and speak in a logical way. I bump into things because I don't see them. And my feet don't go where I think they're going to go, even after all this time.

"Treatment and care for all types of stroke has changed greatly since 2011 because of stroke research. But this has been put on the back-burner during the pandemic. It must come back to the forefront because any prospect of improving recoveries would have a massive impact on the lives of future patients and their families."



For more information on haemorrhagic stroke, visit stroke.org.uk/haemorrhagic or call **01604 687 724** to order our print guide. If you need support following any type of stroke, contact our Stroke Helpline on **0303 3033 100**.

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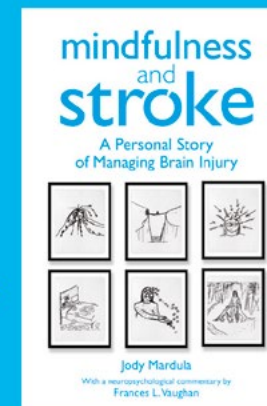
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mindfulness and stroke

Jody Mardula, who was a psychotherapist and Director of the Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice at Bangor University, writes about her recovery after a life threatening stroke.

Frances Vaughan, clinical neuropsychologist, explores Jody's stroke related difficulties and the process of emotional adjustment to this life changing event.



Combining personal narrative, neuropsychology, and adapted mindfulness practices, *Mindfulness and Stroke* offers a rare insight into the experience of acquired brain injury. It was written for people with a stroke or brain injury themselves, and for those who support them in a professional or personal capacity.

Buy online at:
**www.pavpub.com/health-and-social-care/
health-mental-health/mindfulness-and-stroke**



Memory and concentration problems

After a stroke, it's common to find it difficult to concentrate or remember certain things. For example, you might struggle to focus on tasks like reading a book or watching a TV programme, or recall something someone's just told you.

Claire from our Helpline explains why, and shares some guidance:

Q Why has my memory and concentration changed?

Your brain has to constantly understand, organise and store information. If stroke damages the part of your brain that processes this information, you may experience problems with your memory and concentration.

Sometimes memory problems can be caused by problems with concentration. If you find it difficult to focus on what you're being told, you'll struggle to remember it later. So improving your concentration may help with your memory. Emotional problems such as anxiety can also have an impact.

Q Will it get better?

Memory and concentration difficulties are usually worst during the early months following your stroke, but they can and do get better.

The quickest improvements usually happen during the first three months when your brain is most actively trying to repair itself. Recovery tends to slow after this, but it can continue for months and years afterwards. Although some changes may never go away entirely, they shouldn't get worse and many people find they get easier to live with.

Find out more about dealing with memory and concentration problems on stroke.org.uk/thinking. Or order our 'Complete guide to cognitive problems after stroke' in print by calling **01604 687 724**.



Call our Stroke Helpline on **0303 3033 100** or email helpline@stroke.org.uk.

Q What can I do about my memory and concentration problems?

- Start by speaking to your GP. They can make sure that there isn't anything else causing your problems, such as an infection or your medication.
- Take plenty of exercise. It's good for your brain as well as your body and can help you emotionally too.
- Get lots of rest. It's harder to concentrate when you're tired.

Top tips

- Focus on finishing one task before moving on to another.
- Break longer tasks, like cooking, into shorter steps you know you can manage, and plan in rest times.
- Remove distractions. For example, turn off the TV or radio if you need to focus.
- Write or record a 'to-do' list to help you keep track of and prioritise tasks.

Try not to fit too much into one day and take breaks when you need to.

- Be open about the problems you're having and let those around you know how they can help.
- Look into aids and equipment that can help you, especially with memory.
- Be kind to yourself. It's nothing to feel embarrassed about. A stroke is a major brain injury. You're still the same person even though things may be different for you now.

Influencing for change

The coronavirus pandemic has disrupted many stroke survivors' recoveries. That's why long-term improvements to stroke treatment and care are more vital than ever.

With parliamentary elections in Scotland and Wales coming up, we're working with people affected by stroke in these parts of the UK in particular, to ensure politicians keep their commitments to prioritising stroke.

Four years ago, Brenna Collie was at home in Strichen, near Aberdeen. She was texting a friend, when her mobile phone slipped out of her hand. She went to pick it up and realised she couldn't.

She stood up, but didn't know how to walk. She tried to call for help but her speech was slurry.

Brenna was 14. She was having a stroke.

"I knew something terrible was happening, but it felt like nobody apart from my parents believed I might be having a stroke," says Brenna. "They thought I was too young. I was petrified."

Brenna was taken to Aberdeen Royal Infirmary. After diagnosis and her initial treatment, she began therapy to help her to walk again and do day-to-day tasks, like getting dressed and tying her shoelaces.

"The physios were wonderful. I received a high quality of care throughout my recovery and it made a huge difference to my life after stroke. Without that support, I wouldn't be where I am today.

"Can you imagine how much worse it's been with Covid-19 going on? Not being able to do that or see friends and family would have been a nightmare."

"They thought I was too young. I was petrified."





Brenna was in bed texting a friend when she had a stroke.

Despite continuing to experience fatigue, pain and anxiety, Brenna did well at school, and in 2019, won the Scottish Portrait Award's Young Photographer award for a self-portrait depicting the night she had her stroke. She's now 18 and studying Primary Education in Edinburgh.

Brenna wants to make sure all stroke survivors get the right support, no matter where they live. She's working with us in the run up to the Scottish elections,

speaking with MSPs at a virtual event and promoting our Scottish election manifesto. Together, we're asking parliamentary candidates to pledge to continue the stroke improvement work that's happening nationally, so that more people can get the help they need to rebuild their lives.

You can work with us too. Visit stroke.org.uk/campaigns to read our Scotland election manifesto or call **0207 566 0341**.

We also need your support to keep stroke high up the political agenda in:

Northern Ireland

In 2020, we published a report outlining the actions we want decision-makers to take to improve stroke treatment and care. Our campaigners got involved by writing to their local politicians and signing an Open Letter to the Health Minister. As a result, the Health Minister publically stated that he remains committed to stroke reform.

With your help, we'll continue to lobby the government in Northern Ireland to urgently progress stroke reform, including improvements to long-term support.

Wales

Welsh Parliament elections are scheduled for May 2021. With health and social care devolved to the Welsh Government, it's vital that we ensure stroke is on their agenda.



The current Welsh Government Stroke Delivery Plan expires in 2022, and we don't yet know what will replace it. A new stroke plan is critical to improve stroke services, so people can access the best possible treatments and support.

You can help us to highlight this issue with your local candidates, so all those elected to the next Senedd understand the importance of a new stroke plan.

You can support our work in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and our ongoing influencing in England, by signing up to our Campaigns Network at stroke.org.uk/campaigns or by calling **0207 566 0341**.

Stroke-specific exercise

Being active is good for your overall health throughout your recovery and later on in life. It can also help to improve your mood, energy levels and reduce the risk of another stroke.

We've teamed up with the charity A Stroke of Luck, who specialise in exercise-based recovery for stroke survivors, to produce a series of stroke-specific exercise videos to help you get active at home.

Fitzroy Connor has been working his way through one of the exercise programmes. He has difficulties with walking and using his right hand and was having therapy to help his recovery until the coronavirus pandemic stopped his appointments. That's when he came across our stroke-specific exercise programme.

"Initially, I was a bit sceptical about whether it could do anything for me. But after reading other stroke survivors' stories

on My Stroke Guide, I decided to try it."

The videos are divided into three groups. Red for those with limited mobility, who use a wheelchair. Amber for those who have some mobility, but need support. And green for those who can move independently.

"I'm still quite active, so I gave the green one a go," says Fitzroy. "I tried the first video and was hooked.

"The videos are all led by a trained professional. I teach martial arts, so I'm familiar with certain exercises, but the videos gave me different variations that helped with my mobility.



Visit mystrokeguide.com/news to access our exercise programme. And see pages 22 to 27 for some example exercises from the videos. Our 'Getting active after stroke' guide also includes movements you can try at home. Go to stroke.org.uk/exercise or call **01604 687 724** to get a copy.


"They give teaching points, so you might start off repeating a move five times and then in a few weeks, you're able to do it 10 times. They also tell you how to do the moves sitting down, holding on to a wall, or standing, so you can build your confidence. For example, I built up to doing jumping and balance movements that I didn't feel able to try before.

"I did each video three times a week in addition to my normal exercise routines. The coordination

and balance videos helped me the most recovery-wise. I still do them regularly, especially the exercises where you practise walking, lifting your knees and swinging your arms, because that's where I feel I need the most help.

"There's also an exercise where you put an elastic band around your thumb and fingers, then try to open and close your fingers. I did that every other day and I can now hold a knife in and cut with my right hand much better."

Balance exercises

 Green level

Stroke often causes weakness on one side of your body, which can make it difficult to balance. However, regular exercise and balance retraining can help.

Mark Watterson, Physiotherapist at A Stroke of Luck, shares some gentle balance exercises you can try at home.

 Green level

 Amber level

 Red level

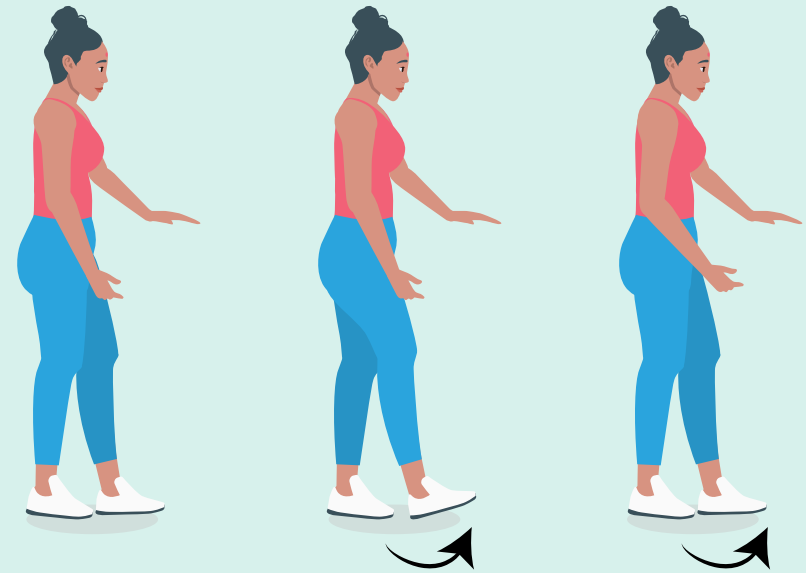
Before you start:

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 can move around independently without aids or support:

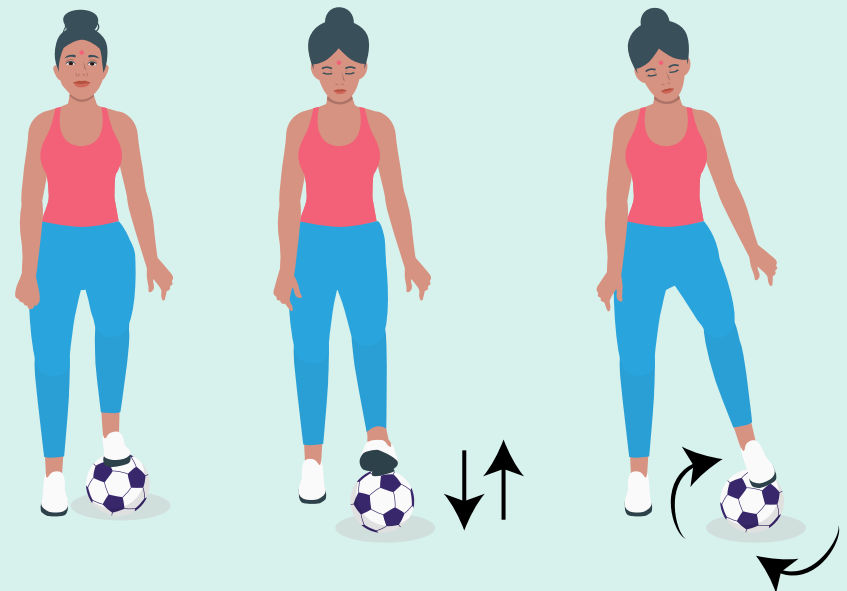
Exercise 1

- Using a work surface or table for support, practise walking back and forth placing your heel in front of your toes.
- Repeat three times.



Exercise 2

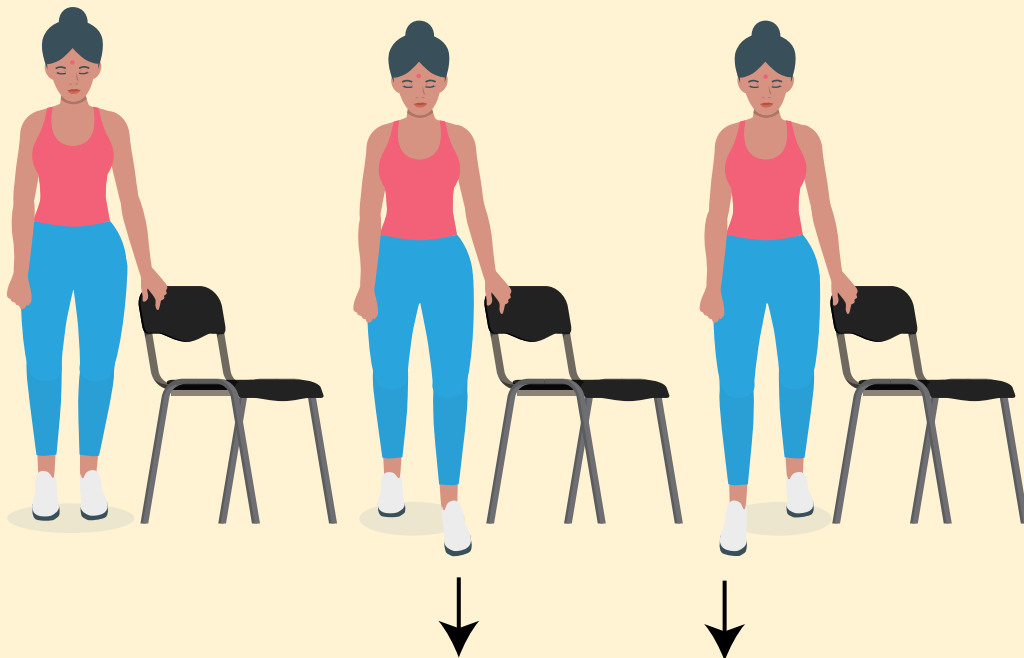
- Stand with a football under one foot.
- Roll the ball back and forth under your foot from your heel to your toes and back again.
- Repeat for 30 seconds.
- Then, keeping your foot on top of the ball, move it round in circles for 15 seconds.
- Repeat on your other leg.



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

Exercise 1

- Stand sideways with your feet shoulder width apart, holding on to a chair or table with your strongest arm.
- Step your strongest foot slightly forward.
- Hold your balance for 10-15 seconds.
- Move your foot back to starting position.
- Repeat exercise with your weaker leg.
- Repeat three times on both legs.



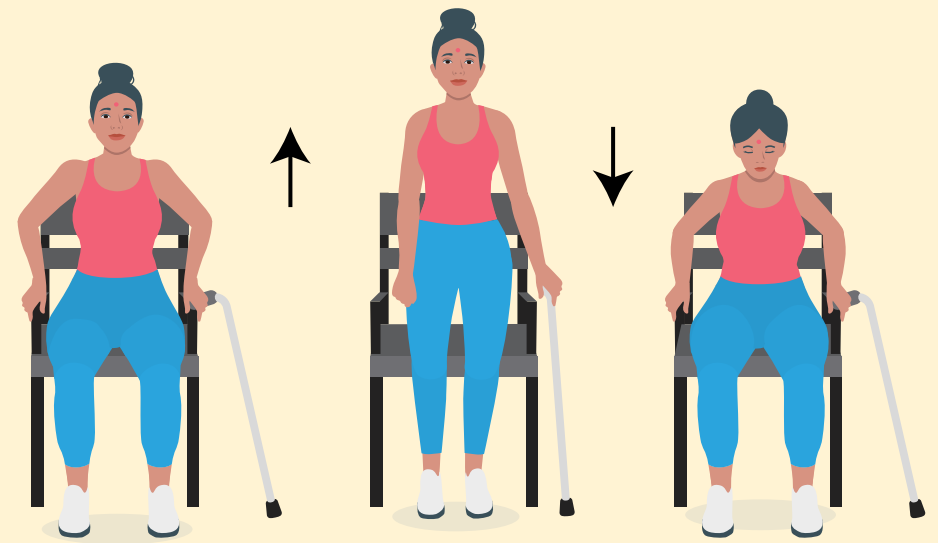
If you feel unsteady standing up, ask a carer or family member to support you on your weaker side.



Amber level

Exercise 2

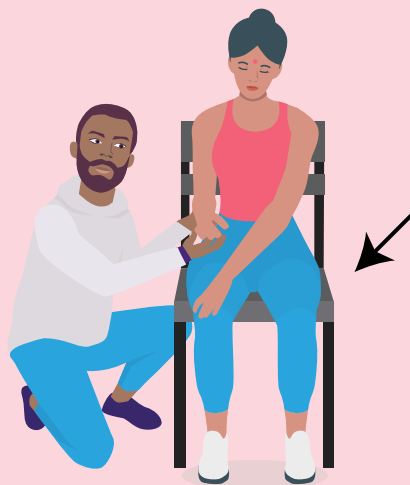
- Sit on a chair with your weaker leg slightly behind your stronger leg.
- Stand up, using your arms to help push you up.
- Use a walking aid to support your standing if needed.
- Slowly lower yourself back to sitting position, using your arms to guide you.
- Repeat three times.



If you have limited mobility
or use a wheelchair:

Exercise 1

- Try to sit up straight in your wheelchair or seat with your back off the chair if you can.
- Reach your stronger arm forwards to tap the opposite knee.
- Return to starting position.
- With your carer or family member gently supporting your weaker arm, repeat the movement on your other side, reaching your weaker arm to tap your stronger knee.
- Repeat three times each side.



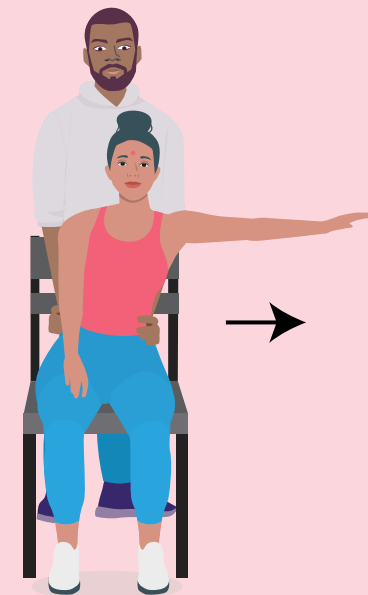
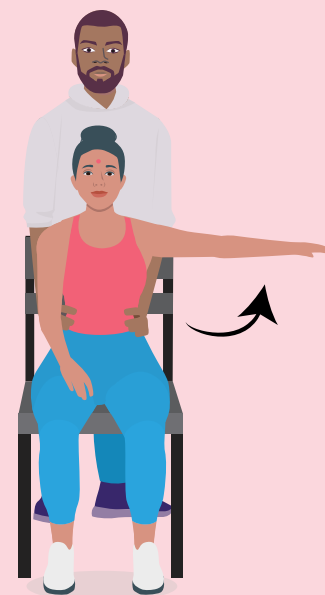
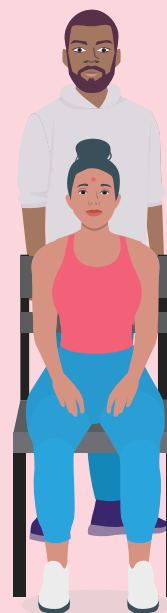
Ask a carer or family member to
support you with these exercises.



Red level

Exercise 2

- Sit upright in your chair.
- Ask your carer or family member to stand behind you and support you by holding your waist.
- Reach your stronger arm out to your side.
- Slowly rock your weight over towards your stronger side, until you feel your buttock on your weaker side lifting slightly.
- Return to the middle.
- Reach three times, then rest and repeat.



Volunteering to be Here For You

Last year, we launched a new telephone support service called Here For You. We connect stroke survivors and carers to trained volunteers. They offer support and help people to feel less isolated after a stroke.

Most of our volunteers, like Jim and Trish Dawson, understand what it's like to have to rebuild your life after stroke.

"Jim had a haemorrhagic stroke (bleed on the brain) in 2016," says Trish. "He spent six weeks in an induced coma. When he returned home, he was unable to walk unaided. But he soon got going again with support from his physiotherapists and a lot of determination."

Trish and Jim have been volunteering with their local communication and support groups since 2017. When the coronavirus pandemic struck,

they were keen to carry on supporting stroke survivors, so signed up to Here For You as well.

"The pandemic has left a lot of new survivors with little or no support," says Jim. "I thought this was a needed service for stroke survivors, so I signed up, did the training, and two weeks later I was allocated my first client.

"He was struggling with balance, mobility, headaches and tiredness, and in a lot of distress. I'd had similar problems after my stroke. I explained how I'd overcome them, answered his questions and reassured him that his concerns were a normal result of stroke. Being able to talk to someone who had been in his situation seems to have helped him a lot."

Trish also enjoys using her experience as a carer to help others. "Being a Here For You volunteer keeps me busy and makes me feel like I'm making a difference during these unusual times," says Trish. "Jim and I find it

very rewarding and the feedback from our beneficiaries is great.

"The training is enjoyable and informative, and you can always talk to your manager if you need help. I found the first call the most difficult. However, as you get to know the person better, it becomes much easier.

"Here For You can reach a lot more people, especially those who are isolated. It's a great service

We're looking for more people with lived experience of stroke to become Here For You telephone volunteers. Visit stroke.org.uk/volunteerhere to sign up.

If you're rebuilding your life after stroke and would like to use our service, call **0303 3033 100**.


for stroke survivors and their families as they are often cast adrift when they leave hospital. Having someone phoning once a week to chat about any problems they have and to help to answer questions can only be beneficial."





A Walk To Remember Nana

Stroke can change lives and take away those we love. But the story of their life, and your memories, live on. In June, we're inviting everyone who's lost a loved one to join us for A Walk To Remember.

There are three simple steps to taking part in A Walk To Remember.

 First, pick a place that has a special meaning to you or reminds you of your loved one.

 Then create a route around that place. It can be any distance you like and is a lovely opportunity to bring friends and family together too.

 Finally, raise lifesaving funds in your loved one's memory to help people affected by stroke.

Emily Higgins and her family are heading to Blackpool in memory of her great-grandmother. "In November 2018, my Nana – 97-year-old Hilda McDonald – passed away shortly after a stroke," says Emily. "In her final moments, she was barely able to speak and could no longer see, but she held our hands tightly. She knew we were there.

"It felt like my Nana's stroke not only cruelly stole her life, but it stole away the matriarch of our family. Leaving us with a hole that I don't ever believe will be filled.

"But, that's not how we will remember her. We'll remember the woman who taught us how



to be well-mannered and who shared stories about her life in the war. The woman who took us on holidays to caravans in North Wales, and who always wanted a cup of tea. We'll remember the lunches we'd pack for our day trips to Blackpool, going on the rides, playing in the amusements and visiting the beach.

"Blackpool always meant so much to her, so my family and I will be taking A Walk To Remember Nana down the five miles from Norbreck North Tram stop to Blackpool Pleasure Beach. Pausing along the front to get the hot sugar covered doughnuts she loved, and dipping our toes in the water.

"She used to tell me that one of the hardest things about growing old was that she knew where she wanted to walk, but her body just wouldn't take her. So, I know she'll be with us every step of the way.

"We're really looking forward to taking this opportunity to laugh and reminisce about our wonderful Nana. Knowing that we're raising lifesaving funds in her memory will make this walk even more special."

If you'd like to walk to remember your loved one too or would like more information, visit stroke.org.uk/AWalkToRemember or call 0300 3300 740.

Stroke and Covid-19

Links between stroke and coronavirus (Covid-19) have hit the headlines in the last year. But we still don't know if the virus can cause stroke, in whom, and how. We urgently need more information to guide new treatments to stop people with Covid-19 having a stroke and to improve outcomes if they do.

We're funding stroke doctors and researchers Dr Richard Perry from University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, and Dr William Whiteley from the University of Edinburgh, to answer these important questions. We spoke to them about their work:



Dr Richard Perry



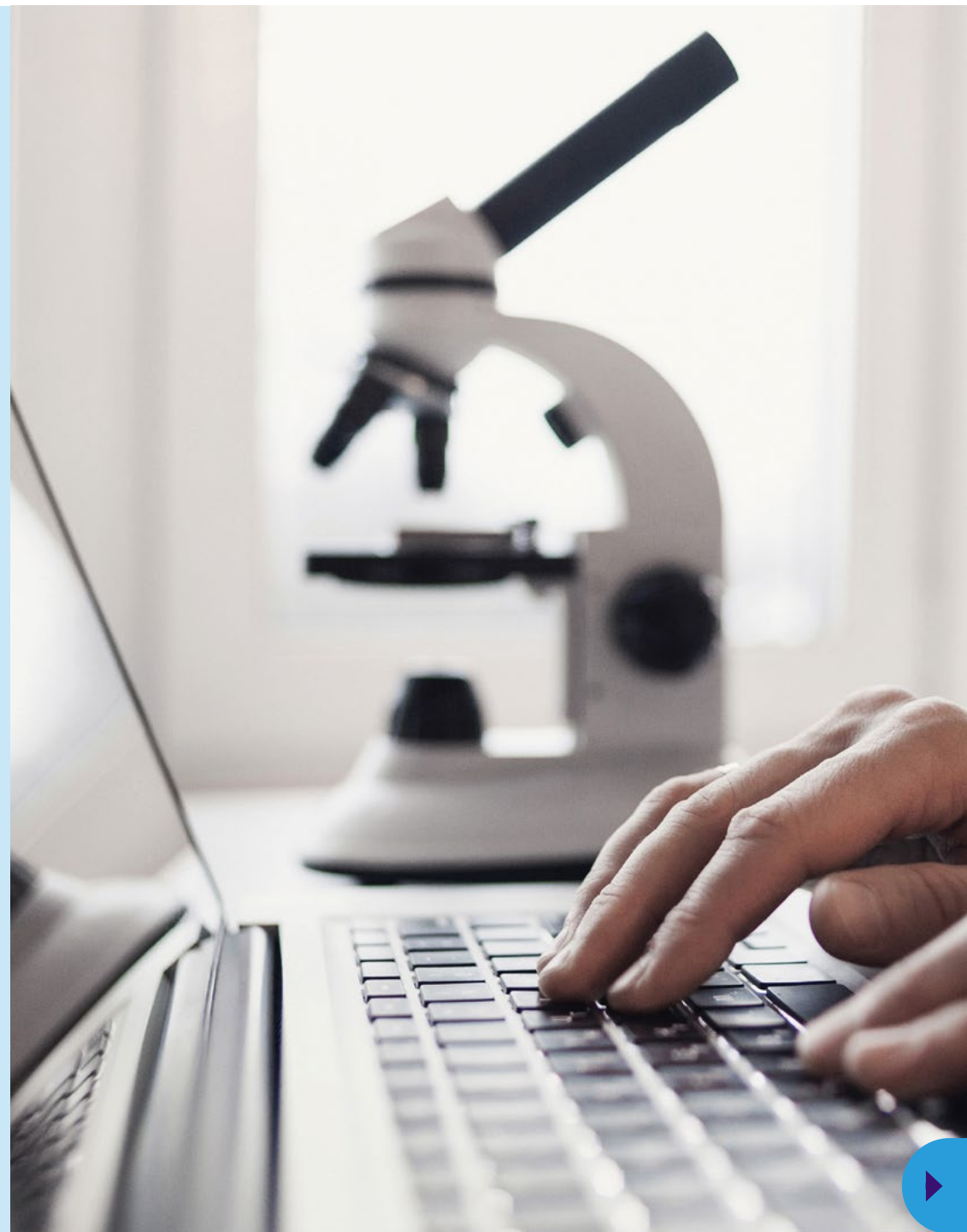
Dr William Whiteley

What do we know about stroke and Covid-19?

Dr Perry: Stroke doctors have seen a small number of people who are extremely ill from Covid-19 also having a stroke. It looks as if the virus can cause unusual blood clotting, which can cause stroke. But these studies are small and

don't rule out that stroke may have happened due to chance.

Dr Whiteley: That's right. These reports have been from small groups of people with the virus, so it doesn't give us a good picture of its effects on stroke in most people.





Q Why is your research important?

Dr Perry: Our teams' research will find out if Covid-19 influences strokes, perhaps making them more severe or causing greater long-term disability.

Right now, doctors, including myself, have virtually no information on the best treatment for people with stroke and Covid-19. This research can give vital evidence about treatments that can improve outcomes after a stroke and stop a second stroke happening.

Dr Whiteley: Likewise, our team will look at if Covid-19 increases risk of stroke, and by how much, by assessing health records from almost every person in the UK. That's around 65 million people!

With this information, we can quickly and accurately find out when people with Covid-19 are at greatest risk of having a stroke and who may need treatments to reduce this risk.

We'll also be comparing risk of stroke due to Covid-19 with other stroke risk factors, such

as problems with the heart and blood vessels, like high blood pressure. This can help researchers and healthcare professionals to understand if treatments to reduce stroke risk need to be prioritised in Covid-19 patients.

Q What's your hope for this research?

Dr Perry: We've come a long way since the start of the pandemic. In the early days, I found it uncomfortable making decisions about patient care with no evidence to guide us. I hope this research can improve how we treat stroke in people with Covid-19.

I'm incredibly proud of the stroke doctors and researchers who contributed to our early studies of stroke and Covid-19 before we had any resources. This much-needed funding from the Stroke Association means we can continue this urgent work.

This much-needed funding from the Stroke Association means we can continue this urgent work.

Dr Richard Perry

Dr Whiteley: This research really is a national effort with experts from all the UK nations working to find answers about links between Covid-19 and stroke.

The NHS collects health information from people across the UK, which is being assessed by the British Heart Foundation Data Science Centre (led by Health Data Research UK). The Stroke Association's funding is enabling us to use this resource, so we can improve care for people with Covid-19 and stroke, and improve research into stroke as a whole.



Find out more about Dr Whiteley and Dr Perry's work at stroke.org.uk/projects or call **0303 3033 100**. You can also support our research by making a donation on stroke.org.uk/donating.

My recovery mountains

Climber Steve Bowker's life changed dramatically when he had a stroke while 30 foot up a rock face in the Peak District. He shares his story:



Visit stroke.org.uk/fundraising to find more about our fundraising challenges and choose the one that's right for you.

I've been tested by bogs, tied-up gates and dodgy stiles, beaten back by gale-force winds, endured miles of tussocked ground and survived several navigational challenges. However, after every knock-back, I've returned to make amends and to show these fells who's boss.

Throughout this challenge, I've improved my walking skills and re-learned how to do things like putting a rucksack on my back by myself. I've also enjoyed discovering the lesser used, sometimes more accessible, routes up the popular peaks.

I climbed the final Wainwright Peak in October 2020. I've raised over £1,900 so far to help support and inspire other stroke survivors. I want to show that there is hope after stroke – that with determination, it's possible to make some sort of recovery, fulfil personal goals and have adventures. And maybe one day, I'll even re-learn how to tie my own bootlaces!"

"My lifelong passion has been climbing. It has taken me all over the world. Then, while climbing at Bamford Edge in the Peak District in 2016, I started to feel unwell. I didn't know what was happening, but fortunately my climbing partner realised something was seriously wrong and arranged mountain rescue recovery.

I spent two months recovering in hospital. In my 40 years of extreme adventures, I've never faced

anything as scary as finding myself in a wheelchair with no control over my own limbs. After five years of rehabilitation, I've learned to walk again but I still have no use of my left side. This is particularly challenging as I was left handed!

My whole lifestyle has changed completely. I'm no longer fully independent or able to be as spontaneous as I'd like, but I'm adapting. I can't put up a tent anymore, so I bought a

campervan and had it adapted for one-handed driving, so I can still get away to the mountains.

Over the last two years, I've been working to complete post-stroke ascents of all 214 'Wainwright Peaks' in the Lake District. What started out as a personal challenge and a way of maintaining a new focus in my post-stroke world, developed into a fundraising opportunity to help stroke survivors.

Reducing my stroke risk

A stroke can happen to anyone. But many of the things we do in everyday life such as smoking, drinking alcohol or being physically inactive, along with health problems including high blood pressure, diabetes or being overweight, can increase your stroke risk.

However, making small changes to your lifestyle can help you to reduce your risk of stroke or further strokes.

Since his stroke in 2017, Dave Wilson, 55 from Gateshead, has been doing just that. "Stroke was a huge shock," says Dave. "I was lucky in that I could walk, talk and use my arms, although not to the same extent as I could before my stroke. But emotionally I'm very different now. I'm more likely to get upset, or breakdown. I would have never done that before my stroke.

"I wanted to do what I could to avoid having another stroke. So along with my wife, I began to change my lifestyle:



Eating healthily

"I started with my diet. I didn't count calories, I just cut out chocolates, sweets or anything fattening and ended up losing four and a half stone. I actually eat more now but the quality is better as it's made from scratch."



Reducing salt

"We don't put salt into our food or add it onto the prepared dish. We cook most of our meals from scratch and put loads of garlic in most things instead. Salt is in many pre-prepared foods, so we always check the traffic lights on the packaging when we go shopping."





Drinking less alcohol

"Having had a brain injury, I wasn't keen on the thought of slowing down my brain cells with alcohol. The no and low-alcohol beers are great, but I drink lime and soda, or orange or blackcurrant with diet lemonade instead.

"It hasn't always been easy. Only having soft drinks at the pub, and no crisps or nuts, raised a few eyebrows among my friends. But explaining what I was doing and why made it easier. Three years on, I still don't drink much alcohol. If I do, I stick rigidly to the guidelines - no more than 14 units in a week, and not too many in one go."



Getting moving

"Initially, it took me 20 minutes to walk a hundred yards, so I started doing gentle exercise at home to improve my fitness, coordination and confidence. For example, press ups against a wall, sitting and standing repeatedly from a chair, and knee lifts.



"I'm now able to do more exercise. Rory, our dog, keeps me walking each day, which has improved my mental health."



Making small changes that last

"Three years on, I still follow these principles. Everyone is different and has their own challenges, but the only person who is going to make you feel better, improve your strength, and health, is you.

"My advice would be to start small. This could be just cutting from two sugars in tea to one, reducing the salt on your dinner or drinking more water. Continue

until these changes are normal, and then start another small change. It will be surprising the differences and improvements you can make."

In January, we held our first Stroke Prevention Day, sponsored by LoSalt* and OMRON, who work with us to raise awareness of the importance of stroke prevention.

What small change you could make to your lifestyle to help you reduce your risk of stroke? Visit stroke.org.uk/prevention or call **0300 3300 100** for more guidance about stroke prevention.



* If you take medication that affects potassium levels, speak to your GP first to check if reduced sodium salt alternatives are suitable for you.



Money matters

After a stroke, people sometimes struggle to manage their money. For example, their disabilities might mean they are unable to sign cheques or use online banking. Or they may have difficulties in making their own decisions (sometimes referred to as a lack of mental capacity). If you support a stroke survivor, here are some ways you can help.

Managing benefits

You can apply to become an appointee so you can manage their benefits, including state pension. As an appointee, you're responsible for making and maintaining their benefit claims.

Someone from the Department of Work and Pensions will assess you and the person you care for to check that an appointee is needed and that you are suitable.

How do I apply to be an appointee?

Phone the helpline for the benefits they're receiving. For example, if they receive Disability Living Allowance, contact the disability benefits helpline. Or visit:

England and Wales:
gov.uk/become-appointee-for-someone-claiming-benefits

Northern Ireland:
nidirect.gov.uk/articles/becoming-appointee-social-security-benefits

Scotland:
mygov.scot/acting-on-behalf-of-someone-claiming-benefits

Managing bank accounts

If the person you support has mental capacity, but has trouble with banking because of mobility, sight or communication difficulties, talk to the bank about the accessible services they offer.

Alternatively, with the account holder's permission, you can be authorised to temporarily operate their bank or building society account for them. Contact their bank to get a third-party mandate form.

Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA) or Enduring Power of Attorney (EPA) for finance and property

If they're likely to need longer term help with their finances, you should discuss power of attorney. This is a legal document giving you permission to handle their finances if they lose their ability to make decisions. However, an LPA (England, Wales, Scotland) or EPA (Northern Ireland) must be set up while they still have mental capacity.

What happens if someone loses mental capacity and hasn't set up an LPA or EPA?

- **England and Wales**
- apply to the Court of Protection to become a deputy (**0300 456 4600** or **gov.uk/become-deputy**).
- **Scotland** - apply to the Office of the Public Guardian to become a guardian (**01324 678 396** or **publicguardian-scotland.gov.uk/guardianship-orders**).
- **Northern Ireland** - apply to the Office of Care and Protection to become a controller (**0300 200 7812** or **justice-ni.gov.uk/articles/how-apply-become-controller**).

These public agencies will decide if you can act in the person's best interests and are suitable to take on their affairs. You may need legal advice – there are fees for registering and for any court hearings.



Communication problems don't automatically mean someone's lost mental capacity. They may just need help to communicate their decisions. A speech and language therapist can help with this.

Puzzles

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

Word search

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

Research
Project
Learn
Prepare
Balance

Risk
Connect
Election
Guide
Brain

Across

- 1 Stalemate (8)
- 5 Shipping hazard; composer (4)
- 8 Powered control mechanism (5)
- 9 Hard to make out (7)
- 11 Combine (numbers) (3)
- 12 Common fossil (9)
- 13 Slice (of bacon) (6)
- 15 Particular feature (6)
- 18 Avocado-based dish (9)
- 19 Was victorious (3)
- 20 Frightening creature (7)
- 21 Proverb, maxim (5)
- 22 Rule Britannia composer (4)
- 23 Slope (8)

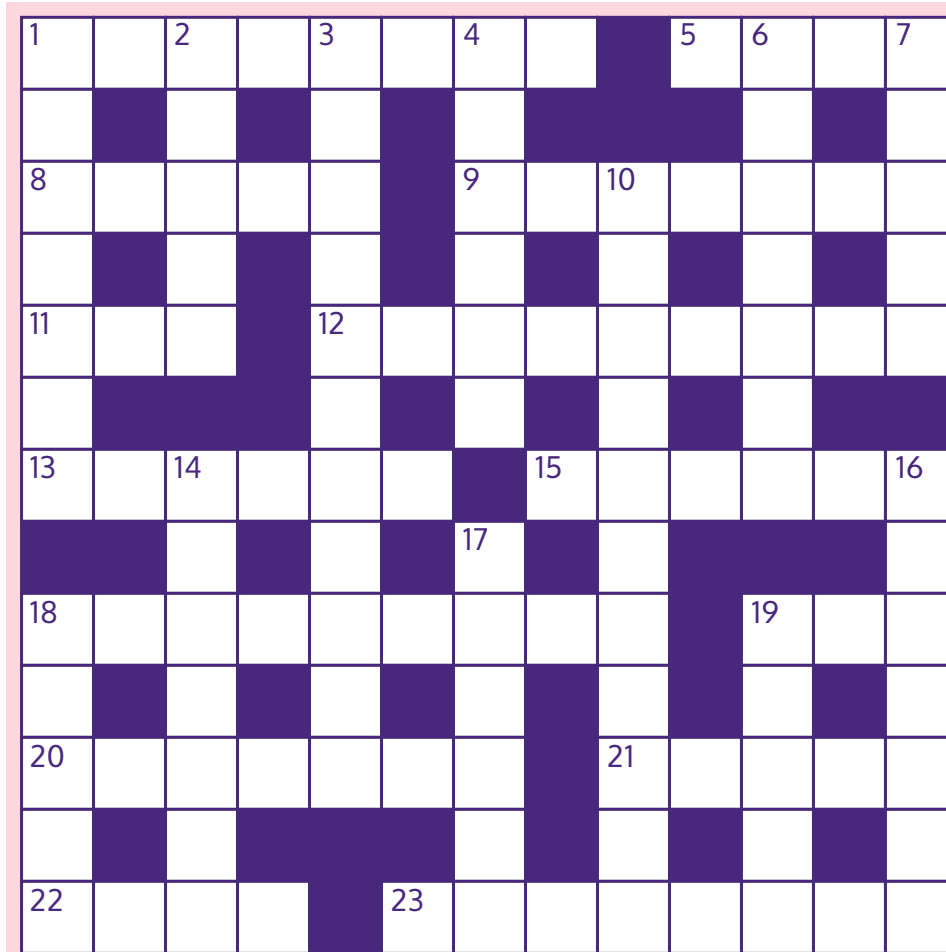
Lottery

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 Complete loss of hope (7)
- 2 Unpleasantly bitter (5)
- 3 Appear suitable for one's role (4,3,4)
- 4 Polish composer (6)
- 6 Very learned (7)
- 7 Diving bird (5)
- 10 Union official (4,7)
- 14 Irish river (7)
- 16 Line touching a circle (7)
- 17 Intense disgust (6)
- 18 Greek letter G (5)
- 19 Cetacean (5)

Solutions
see page 48



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.

Martin and Nicola Foley

Well done to Councillor Martin Foley, Chair of Uttlesford District Council, for completing a 500-mile virtual walk from Thaxted in Essex to Iona in the Hebrides. Martin has raised well over £2,000 for stroke survivors like his wife, Claire. His daughter,



Nicola, is also running 500 miles to raise even more money. Good luck Nicola.

Katie Fry

Katie Fry's husband, Dale, had a stroke in July 2020, aged 36. Unfortunately the pandemic made it difficult for Dale and Katie's young children to visit him in hospital. Determined to do something positive, Katie challenged herself to run 50 miles in January. So far, she's raised an amazing £7,500.



Find out what events we've got coming up on page 48 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, providing them the emotional support they need to begin rebuilding their life.



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



Mike Lynch

Congratulations to Mike Lynch, 58, from Calderdale, Yorkshire, who cycled 100 miles every month from June to December 2020 as part of our Spin for Stroke virtual challenge. Mike has raised over £1,000 in memory of his partner, Christine.



Volunteer spotlight

Leona Bramble has been the chair for the Heart of Birmingham Stroke Group for over 10 years.

"I look after the group's finances, shop so we can make everyone meals, and organise activities, from drumming to pottery.

"I love every minute I spend with the group. We're a family. Sessions are full of laughter, chaos and chatter. And when someone is sad, we support them.

"Due to Covid-19, we haven't been able to meet, but this hasn't broken our bond. We're using WhatsApp and Zoom to stay in touch.

"I don't see a time when I'm not part of the group because it's part of me."

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

Dates for your diary

Although many face-to-face events are on hold for the moment, there are still lots of ways you can get involved and fundraise at home:

Virtual UK Stroke Assembly 2021

May - June

We're bringing the UK Stroke Assembly to you. Get online resources, workshops and materials to support your recovery at home. For more details as they're confirmed, sign up to our newsletter: stroke.org.uk/SAsignup.



Virtual Resolution Run

Take on any distance between 1k-15k at a time and place that suits you. Whether that's in your local park, taking the dog around the block or on a running machine, the challenge is yours to set: resolutionrun.org.uk/virtual.

Spin for Stroke

Decide where you'll do your cycle – indoors or outdoors? How far you'll cycle; will it be 25, 50 or 100 miles? Then get your feet on the pedals! Sign up at: stroke.org.uk/spin.

Stride for Stroke

Challenge yourself to walk 1.2 million steps in 120 days. That's one step for the 1.2 million stroke survivors in the UK and works out at 10,000 steps a day. Find out more: stroke.org.uk/stride.

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

Crossword solution

Across: 1 Deadlock; 5 Berg; 8 Servo; 9 Obscure; 11 Add; 12 Trilobite; 13 Rasher; 15 Aspect; 18 Guacamole; 19 Won; 20 Monster; 21 Adage; 22 Arne; 23 Gradient

Down: 1 Despair; 2 Acid; 3 Look the part; 4 Chopin; 6 Erudite; 7 Grebe; 10 Shop steward; 14 Shannon; 16 Tangent; 17 Horror; 18 Gamma; 19 Whale



Save research. Rebuild lives.

Research helps stroke survivors to rebuild their lives, but the pandemic has hit research hard. Together, we can save the stroke research that could lead to breakthroughs in treatment and care.

Please donate what you can today at stroke.org.uk/donating, by calling us on **0300 330 0740** or by completing the form below.

I enclose my total gift of £

Funds raised will go towards vital services and pioneering research to help rebuild the lives of people affected by stroke.

<I/We> enclose a cheque made payable to Stroke Association OR please debit <my/our>: ☐ MasterCard ☐ Visa ☐ CAF Charity Card

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Expiry date: /

Signature(s):

Date: / /

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giftaid it

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Date: / /

☐ Sorry, I am not a UK taxpayer, and therefore cannot take part in Gift Aid.

Return your form

Please detach this form and post to:

**Stroke Association, Bumpers Way, Bumpers Farm,
Chippenhams SN14 6NG**



Keeping in touch

We would love to send you information about the difference you can make to families affected by stroke through campaigning, volunteering, donating and through your own fundraising. Please tell us how you'd like us to stay in touch by filling in your details below.

How would you like to hear from us?

☐ Email ☐ Text ☐ Phone

Your name:

Please enter your phone number or email:

Address

Postcode

Our Promise

Your privacy is our priority. We promise to keep your details safe and will never sell them. We will also keep in touch by post about how we can continue to support you, and opportunities to support us. If you would like to change the way you hear from us, just call **0300 3300 740** or email supportercare@stroke.org.uk. How we protect and use your personal data is set out in our privacy policy at stroke.org.uk/privacy.

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