

Holidays after stroke

Holidays are an important part of life, but if you or someone you care for has had a stroke it can be difficult to find something suitable. This factsheet lists many useful organisations that can help people with disabilities to arrange a holiday, including independent breaks in the UK and abroad, holidays with assistance, and respite breaks.

Types of holiday

If you're thinking about getting away, there are various **holiday options** to choose from with different levels of support.

If your stroke has left you with **mobility problems**, you might prefer to book with a **travel agency** that can provide care and equipment. Some holidays have an organised programme of **activities** which may range from quite physically demanding to more relaxed. Other organisations only offer accommodation so that you can do your own thing.

Respite breaks aim to give carers some time off and allow stroke survivors to have a change of surroundings too. It could involve a short stay in a care home or an overseas holiday.

You will have to **fund your own holiday** in most cases, particularly if you want to travel overseas. However, if you are struggling financially, there are some charities which partially or fully fund holidays (see page 7).

Do I need travel insurance?

It is important to have travel insurance, especially if you are going abroad. We offer insurance services that can arrange this (see page 3).

Make sure you declare if you've had a stroke when arranging your insurance and **check that you are fully covered**. Many policies will exclude pre-existing medical conditions (conditions which you had before you took out the policy). This varies between policies, but may mean that you would have to pay any costs relating to your condition.

European Health Insurance Card

The European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) is free to apply for and entitles you to **free medical treatment in some European countries** or to claim back some medical costs. The EHIC will not cover certain costs, including the cost of returning you to the UK, if necessary, so it is still **important to get private travel insurance as well**. Some insurance companies insist you have an EHIC and will waive your excess if you have one. You can apply for an EHIC from the NHS Business Services Authority (see page 3).

Travelling with medication

If you need medication, make sure you pack it in your **hand-luggage** and take enough to last you through any unexpected delays. It is also a good idea to take a letter from your doctor stating what your medication is and why you need it.

There may be **restrictions** on taking medication into some countries so check beforehand with the **Foreign and Commonwealth Office** (see page 4). The airline, if you are flying, may also require you or your doctor to complete medical forms.

It is also a good idea to check with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office about specific **health advice** and entry requirements for the country you are visiting.

Can I fly after a stroke?

People often ask when it is safe to fly after a stroke. It is probably best to **avoid flying** for the first **two weeks**. This is the time when your problems are likely to be most severe and other conditions related to your stroke may come up. After that there may not seem to be any reason why you should not fly, but it is always advisable to **check with your doctor before flying**.

Aircraft cabins have less oxygen available than normal. This is not usually a problem, but it may be if you have a heart or breathing condition.

On a **long-haul flight** (six hours or more), you are likely to be inactive for a long period of time. This will slow your blood flow, making it more likely to clot, and may cause a **deep vein thrombosis (DVT)**. A DVT is a blood clot in a vein, usually in your leg. This

can be dangerous if small clots break off from a DVT and travel to your lungs. If you have a hole in your heart called a **patent foramen ovale (PFO)** it may be possible for a small clot to pass through your bloodstream to your brain, causing a stroke.

Anyone can develop a DVT and they can also occur with long-distance train or car journeys. You may be more at risk of DVT if you have had a stroke or are aged over 60.

You can reduce your risk of DVT by doing **simple exercises** such as flexing your ankles. If possible, take an occasional short walk to get your blood flowing. You should also **drink plenty of water** and avoid alcohol, as dehydration can thicken your blood and increase the risk of clots forming. Wearing elastic compression stockings may also help.

Contact the airline to discuss your requirements, including any additional help you will need on the flight, at least 48 hours in advance.

All European airports should have facilities to help you move through the airport and get on and off the plane if you have reduced mobility. Airline crew are not able to provide personal care. The airline may insist that you travel with a companion if you are unable to understand safety briefings or reach emergency exits without help.

Most airlines will carry **two items of mobility equipment for free**. Larger items, such as wheelchairs, will need to be checked in.

Help available from the Stroke Association

The Stroke Association

Insurance Services

Tel: 01603 828396

Website: www.stroke.org.uk

The Stroke Association Insurance Services, run by Heath Lambert, have created travel insurance that caters for stroke survivors, their families and friends travelling with them, and for anyone who wants to support us. Here are some of the benefits:

- cover is available worldwide
- no upper age limits on single trip policies
- annual multi-trip policies available for most countries up to age 70 (worldwide policies are available up to age 65)
- no separate calls to medical screening companies are required
- five per cent discount if you book online.

The Stroke Association receives a donation for every policy sold.

Essential Travel

Tel: 01603 828 396

Website: www.essentialtravel.co.uk/stroke-association/index.asp

The Stroke Association Insurance Services have joined up with Essential Travel to provide travel extras for people with medical conditions or a disability, including:

- airport parking
- airport hotels
- airport lounges
- car hire excess insurance.

The Stroke Association receives a donation for every policy sold.

Other useful organisations

All organisations listed are UK-wide unless otherwise stated.

NHS Business Services Authority,

European Health Insurance Card, (EHIC) Applications

Tel: 0845 605 0707

Website: www.ehic.org.uk

You can apply for the EHIC by internet, phone or post.

Organisations that give advice and details of other services

Tourism for All

c/o Vitalise,

Tel: 0303 303 0146 (for information)

Email: info@tourismforall.org.uk

Website: www.tourismforall.org.uk

This national charity runs an information service for people with disabilities.

They have a directory of accessible accommodation, attractions, respite care and services, both overseas and in the UK, including current special offers. They produce a range of publications such as Open Britain, a 400-page guide for people with disabilities, including where to stay and visit in Britain. This costs £9.99. There is also a website: www.openbritain.net

Holidays for all

Tel: 08451 249 973

Website: www.holidaysforall.org.uk

A group of UK disability charities and specialist tour companies. Their brochure lists details of holidays, and can be downloaded from their website.

Disabled Go

Tel: 0845 270 4627

Email: questions@disabledgo.com

Website: www.disabledgo.com

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Produces online accessibility guides to UK venues such as hotels and attractions.

Disabled Holiday Information

Email: info@disabledholidayinfo.org.uk

Website: www.disabledholidayinfo.org.uk

Provides information on accessible holiday accommodation, attractions and activities.

Produces a range of factsheets.

Disabled Travel Advice

Website: www.disabledtraveladvice.co.uk

Website offering advice on aspects of travelling with a disability including how holidays affect access to benefits and medication.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Tel: 0845 850 2829 (Open 24/7)

Email:

TravelAdvicePublicEnquiries@fco.gov.uk

Website: www.fco.gov.uk

Gives travel advice by country.

Good Access Guide

Tel: 01502 566 005

Website: www.goodaccessguide.co.uk

Online directory of disability-friendly accommodation, leisure activities, equipment and holidays.

RADAR (The Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation)

Tel: 020 7250 3222

Website: www.radar.org.uk

Publishes a guide to caravanning for people with disabilities for £3 including postage. Other useful links available on their website.

RNIB (Royal National Institute of Blind People)

Tel: 0303 123 9999

Email: helpline@rnib.org.uk

Website: www.rnib.org.uk

Produces a factsheet which has ideas for holidays, planning advice and details of where you can find temporary nursing and care.

Shared Care Scotland

Tel: 01383 622 462

Email: office@sharedcarescotland.com

Website: www.sharedcarescotland.org.uk

Enquiry service to put carers and service users in touch with short break and respite services. Provides general information and advice about short breaks. Manages a government grant programme to enable carers in Scotland to have short breaks.

Visit Britain

Website: www.visitbritain.com

The official website of the British Tourist Authority. Provides details of attractions in England, Scotland and Wales as well as disabled accommodation and transport advice. Runs the National Accessible Scheme, a nationally recognised rating to ensure accommodation meets accessibility standards.

Organisations which arrange holidays or respite breaks

Vitalise

Tel: 0303 303 0145

Email: bookings@vitalise.org.uk

Website: www.vitalise.org.uk

Vitalise provide breaks for people with disabilities and their carers at four accessible holiday centres in the UK. All breaks are full board and include 24 hour nursing care and personal support. Breaks include a range of activities and excursions and centres have leisure facilities and gardens. Their website has some information about fundraising for holidays.

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Disaway Trust

Email: lynnimpkins@hotmail.com

Website: www.disaway.co.uk

Organises group holidays in the UK and abroad for physically disabled people aged 16-80. Volunteer helpers and a nurse are available on each holiday. Holidaymakers are expected to pay the cost of the holiday.

Holidays for Disabled People Ltd

Email: disholspw@aol.com

Website: www.holidaysfordisabled.com

Organises group holidays in the UK for people with disabilities. Volunteer helpers, trained nurses and transport are provided. Holidaymakers must pay for the holiday.

Refresh

Tel: 023 8045 3686.

Email: refresh@gstt.nhs.uk

Website: www.refreshcare.co.uk

Provides holidays at a home in Southampton. Can care for people with severe disabilities and take care of securing funding for a break on your behalf.

Activity breaks

3H Fund (Help the Handicapped Holiday Fund)

Tel: 01892 860 207

Email: info@3hfund.org.uk

Website: www.3hfund.org.uk

Provides subsidised group holidays for children and adults with disabilities. Volunteers provide help and support. In some cases, grants are available for people on low incomes to have a holiday in the UK.

Calvert Trust

Tel: 01434 250 232

Email: enquiries@calvert-kielder.com

Website: www.calvert-trust.org.uk

Aims to provide meaningful challenge and

adventure for people with disabilities and their families and friends. Has three outdoor activity centres: Kielder, Keswick and Exmoor. Financial assistance and care are available through the trust in some cases.

Disability Snowsport UK

Tel: 01479 861 272

Website: www.disabilitysnowsport.org.uk

Provides overseas activity weeks and adaptive ski schools throughout the UK.

Holidays with help

Tel: 07539 063 327

Email: hwholidays@btinternet.com

Website: www.holidayswithhelp.org.uk

Has three UK venues which provide a range of indoor and outdoor activities. Volunteers assist guests with care needs. Takes group and individual bookings.

Jubilee Sailing Trust

Tel: 02380 449 108

Email: info@jst.org.uk

Website: www.jst.org.uk

Sailing holidays for people aged over 16 years. Caters for both disabled and able bodied people, working as part of a crew on a tall ship. Help with funding may be available.

PHAB

Tel: 020 8667 9443

Email: info@phab.org.uk

Website: www.phab.org.uk

Operates activity holidays throughout England and Wales for people of all ages and abilities.

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Accommodation

Vision Hotels

Tel: 0845 603 0051

Email: enquiries@visionhotels.co.uk

Website: www.visionhotels.co.uk

A not-for-profit organisation, part of Action for Blind People. Runs four hotels which cater for people with visual impairments.

Leonard Cheshire Disability

Tel: 020 3242 0200

Email: info@lcdisability.org

Website: www.lcdisability.org

Has a hotel in the Sandringham estate and a holiday cottage in South West Scotland. Also offers short respite break services at home or in one of their registered care homes.

Travel agents

Access Travel

Tel: 01942 888 844

Email: webenq@access-travel.co.uk

Website: www.access-travel.co.uk

Tour operator that organises overseas holidays for disabled people. Care and nursing services are available at certain holiday destinations. Equipment and adapted vehicles can also be hired at some resorts.

Accessible Travel and Leisure

Tel: 01452 729 739

Email: info@accessibletravel.co.uk

Website: www.accessibletravel.co.uk

Accessible holiday company. Organises inclusive, tailored holidays.

Can Be Done Ltd

Tel: 020 8907 2400

Email: holidays@canbedone.co.uk

Website: www.canbedone.co.uk

Arranges holidays worldwide for people with disabilities. Specialises in wheelchair accessible holidays.

Chalfont Line Ltd

Tel: 01895 459 540

Email: holidays@chalfont-line.co.uk

Website: www.chalfont-line.co.uk

Provides worldwide holidays with personal assistance packages for an additional cost.

Disabled Holiday Directory

Tel: 0800 993 0796

Website: www.disabledholidaydirectory.co.uk

Arranges holidays in the UK and overseas in accessible properties. Equipment is available for hire.

Enable Holidays

Tel: 0871 222 4939

Email: info@enableholidays.com

Website: www.enableholidays.com

A specialist tour operator for people with disabilities. Offers holidays in several overseas locations. All holidays in their brochure are assessed for their suitability.

Livability

Tel: 020 7452 2000

Email: info@livability.org.uk

Website: www.livability.org.uk

Has accessible hotels in Llandudno and Minehead and various self-catering facilities.

Traveleyes

Tel: 08448 040 221

Website: www.traveleyes-international.com

Arranges help for people with visual impairments through other sighted holidaymakers.

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Arranging air travel

Flying with Disability

Website: www.flying-with-disability.org

General advice about flying with a disability, including preparations and accessibility. (No offline contact details available.)

DPTAC (Disabled Person's Transport Advisory Committee Secretariat)

Tel: 020 7944 8011

Email: dptac@dft.gsi.gov.uk

Website: <http://dptac.independent.gov.uk>

Free information about accessible travel from the committee which advises the government.

Parkat

Website: www.parkat.co.uk

Airport parking comparison website.

Produces an online disabled and reduced mobility airport guide.

Parking4Less

Tel: 0800 902 0381

Website: www.parking4less.co.uk

Information about disabled parking at UK airports.

Help with funding holidays

Stroke Association

For stroke survivors in financial hardship, the Stroke Association can provide grants of up to £200, which can be put towards a holiday in the UK. For more information, you can contact the Stroke Helpline on 0303 3033 100 or email info@stroke.org.uk

Our resource sheet, *R1, Benefits and financial assistance*, may also help.

Blitz Holiday Funding

Tel: 01253 341218

Email: blitz@bondhotel.co.uk

Website: www.bondhotel.co.uk

Subsidises short breaks in Blackpool and St Anne's. Supported by Bond Holidays who provide holidays for people with disabilities.

Family Holiday Association

Tel: 020 3117 0650

Website: www.fhaonline.org.uk

Funds holidays in the UK for families in severe financial hardship and facing other difficulties like long-term illness.

Handicapped Aid Trust

Tel: 0800 028 0647

Email: secretary@handicappedaidtrust.org.uk

Website: www.handicappedaidtrust.org.uk

The charity contributes towards the cost of hiring helpers so that disabled people can have a holiday.

Disclaimer: Stroke Association provides the details of other organisations for information only. Inclusion in this factsheet does not constitute a recommendation or endorsement.

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For sources used, visit stroke.org.uk

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Text **STROKE 5** to **70300** to donate £5. 100% of your donation goes to the Stroke Association. Find out how your support helps at stroke.org.uk/savelives

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