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 more difficult to find something suitable. This guide 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 may prefer to book with a travel agency that can arrange care and equipment for you. Some holiday packages also include an organised programme of activities, such as sports and outdoor activities or visits to local attractions, while others only offer accommodation so that you can do your own thing.

Respite breaks aim to give carers some time off and allow you to have a change of surroundings too. It could involve a short stay in a home in the UK that can provide care and support or it may be an overseas group holiday.

Usually, you will have to fund your own holiday, particularly if you want to travel overseas. However, if you are struggling financially, there are some charities that can help to pay for your holiday. Turn to the Help with funding holidays section at the end of this leaflet for some ideas.

Air travel after a stroke

People often ask whether it is safe to fly after a stroke. It is probably best to avoid flying for the first two weeks as 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, it’s best to get advice from your doctor about whether it’s safe for you to fly. Check with your airline before flying, as some airlines may ask for a medical certificate from your doctor.

During a flight, the air pressure inside an aeroplane cabin is lower than it is on the ground. So when you fly, you have a bit less oxygen in your blood than normal. This may affect certain people with a heart problem or breathing condition, so ask your GP if this applies to you.

On a long flight, you are likely to be inactive for a period of time which makes you more likely to develop a deep vein thrombosis (DVT). A DVT is a blood clot in a vein, often in the leg. If small clots break off from a DVT and travel to your lungs, this can cause a blockage in the main artery to the lungs. This is known as a pulmonary embolism and can be life-threatening if not treated.
Anyone can develop a DVT but your risk increases when you’re not mobile for a long period of time. This can happen on long coach, car and train journeys as well as on aeroplanes.

You can reduce the risk of a DVT by doing simple exercises such as flexing your ankles. Take a short walk when you can to get your blood flowing. You should also drink plenty of water and avoid alcohol, as dehydration can increase the risk of clots forming. Wearing compression stockings can help, but you need to get advice from a professional such as a pharmacist to ensure they fit properly. Ask your GP about your risk of a blood clot and make sure you take any medication with you.

Getting around the airport

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, and the airline may insist that you travel with a companion if you are unable to eat, understand safety briefings or reach emergency exits without help.

Most airlines will carry two items of mobility equipment for free. This should be in addition to your baggage allowance. If you have a wheelchair, it will be stored in the hold. You should tell your airline, travel agent or tour operator before you travel if you’re taking a battery-powered wheelchair or mobility aid.

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

Do I need travel insurance?

It is important to have travel insurance, especially if you are going abroad.

Our insurance services can offer you reliable and comprehensive cover for your holiday. Find out more at stroke.org.uk/insurance.

Make sure you declare that you’ve had a stroke when arranging your insurance and check that you are fully covered. Many policies will exclude conditions that you had before you took out the policy (known as pre-existing medical conditions). This varies between policies, but it could mean that you would have to pay for any costs relating to these conditions.

European Health Insurance Card (EHIC)

The European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) allows you to receive state-provided healthcare in some European countries at a reduced cost, or sometimes for free. It will cover your treatment until you return to the UK. It also covers treatment of pre-existing medical conditions.

It won’t cover certain costs, including the cost of returning you to the UK, so you still need to get private travel insurance as well. You can apply for an EHIC online at www.ehic.org.uk. An EHIC card is free of charge. If you are charged a fee while applying online, check that you are on the correct website.

Did you know?

In an emergency, you can dial the European emergency number 112 from any telephone or mobile phone.
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**Travelling with medication**

If you need medication, pack it in your hand luggage along with a copy of your prescription. Make sure you take enough with you in case you are unexpectedly delayed. If your medication is a liquid, you need a letter from your doctor or a prescription to explain what it is and why you need it. As well as helping you avoid any problems at airline security and customs, this will be useful if you need medical help while you’re away. Contact the airline or travel company for the latest guidance before you travel.

There may be restrictions on taking medications into some countries, or specific health advice on travel in a particular area. Check beforehand with the embassy of the country you’re travelling to, or visit [www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice).

**Where to get help and information**

**From the Stroke Association**

**Talk to us**

Our Stroke Helpline is for anyone affected by a stroke, including family, friends and carers. The Helpline can give you information and support on any aspect of stroke.

Call us on **0303 3033 100**, from a textphone **18001 0303 3033 100** or email info@stroke.org.uk.

**Read our publications**

We publish detailed information about a wide range of stroke topics including reducing your risk of a stroke and rehabilitation. Read online at [stroke.org.uk](http://stroke.org.uk) or call the Helpline to ask for printed copies.

**Other sources of help and information**

**Advice about travelling with disabilities**

**Disabled Go**

**Website:** [www.disabledgo.com](http://www.disabledgo.com)
**Tel:** 01438 842 710
**Email:** enquiries@disabledgo.com

Produces information about access to thousands of venues across the UK and Republic of Ireland, including shops, theatres and railway stations.

**Disabled Holiday Information**

**Website:** [www.disabledholidayinfo.org.uk](http://www.disabledholidayinfo.org.uk)
**Email:** info@disabledholidayinfo.org.uk

Offers information for people with all kinds of disabilities and mobility issues about accessible holiday accommodation, attractions and activities in the UK.
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Disabled Travel Advice
Website: www.disabledtraveladvice.co.uk
Offers advice on all aspects of traveling with a disability.

European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) applications
Website: www.ehic.org.uk
Tel: 0300 300 1350
You can apply for an EHIC online or by phone. You can also download a form from the website to complete by hand and post to the NHS Business Services Authority.

Holidays for all
Website: www.holidaysforall.org.uk
Tel: 0845 124 9971
This is a consortium of accessible holiday providers. The website has details of a variety of accessible holiday options with links to individual providers, or you can call to request a brochure.

Good Access Guide
Website: www.goodaccessguide.co.uk
Tel: 01502 806 706
Online directory of disability friendly accommodation, leisure activities, equipment and holidays.

Open Britain
Website: www.openbritain.net
Produced by Tourism for All, this website has lots of information about accessible tourism in the UK. It includes directories of accessible destinations and places to stay.

Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)
Website: www.rnib.org.uk/holidays
Tel: 0303 123 9999
Email: helpline@rnib.org.uk
Provides information to help people with vision problems plan a holiday.

Shared Care Scotland
Website: www.sharedcarescotland.org.uk
Tel: 01383 622462
Email: office@sharedcarescotland.com
Offers information to help you and your carer plan a short break and respite care. It explains the different services that are available and where you can go to apply for funding if you need to.

Tourism for All
Website: www.tourismforall.org.uk
Tel: 0845 124 9971
Email: info@tourismforall.org.uk
This national charity runs an information service for people with disabilities. They have lots of information and advice that can help you plan a trip both in the UK and overseas.

Visit Britain
Website: www.visitbritain.com
The official website of the British Tourist Authority. Runs the National Accessible Scheme, a nationally recognised rating to ensure accommodation meets accessibility standards.

Organisations that arrange holidays or respite breaks

Disaway Trust
Website: www.disaway.co.uk
Tel: 01737 214805
Email: lynnesimpkins@hotmail.com
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.
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Holidays for Disabled People  
**Website:** www.holidaysfordisabled.com  
**Email:** holidaysfordisabled@btinternet.com  
Organises group holidays in the UK for people with physical disabilities. Volunteer helpers, trained nurses and transport are provided. Holidaymakers must pay for the holiday.

Holidays with help  
**Website:** www.holidayswithhelp.org.uk  
**Email:** holidayswithhelp@gmail.com  
Provides respite care breaks for people with disabilities and their carers. Support is provided by trained and experienced helpers.

The Jumbulance Trust  
**Website:** www.jumbulance.org.uk  
**Tel:** 01582 765 423  
**Email:** info@jumbulance.org.uk  
Accessible travel charity that offers short breaks or days out in accessible coaches called Jumbulances, for people with disabilities or serious health conditions.

Revitalise  
**Website:** www.revitalise.org.uk  
**Tel:** 0303 303 0145  
A national charity that provides respite care for disabled people and carers. They have three holiday centres in England, each offering short breaks in a relaxed, holiday-style environment. Guests are supported by volunteers and breaks include a range of activities and excursions. The website has some information about how to find funding for your holiday.

Activity breaks

3H Fund (Helping Hands for Holidays)  
**Website:** www.3hfund.org.uk  
**Tel:** 01892 860207  
**Email:** info@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  
**Website:** www.calvert-trust.org.uk  
Enables people with disabilities, together with their family and friends, to take part in outdoor activity holidays. They have three outdoor activity centres: Exmoor, Kielder and Lake District. You can request a brochure from the website.

Disability Snowsport UK  
**Website:** www.disabilitysnowsport.org.uk  
**Tel:** 01479 861 272  
**Email:** admin@disabilitysnowsport.org.uk  
Provides overseas activity weeks and adaptive ski schools throughout the UK.

Jubilee Sailing Trust  
**Website:** www.jst.org.uk  
**Tel:** 023 8044 9108  
**Email:** info@jst.org.uk  
Sailing holidays for people aged over 16 years. Caters for both disabled and able-bodied people. Help with funding may be available.

PHAB  
**Website:** www.phab.org.uk  
**Tel:** 020 8667 9443  
**Email:** info@phab.org.uk  
Operates activity holidays throughout England and Wales for people of all ages and abilities.

For more information visit stroke.org.uk
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Accommodation

Leonard Cheshire Disability
Website: www.leonardcheshire.org
Tel: 020 3242 0200
Offers short breaks for people with disabilities and their carers aged 18–65. They have almost 100 homes where you can stay for a few days or several weeks. They also have activity and skills groups around the UK as well as a hotel in the Sandringham estate and a guest house in Edinburgh that are specially adapted for people with disabilities.

Livability
Website: www.livability.org.uk
Tel: 020 7452 2000
Email: info@livability.org.uk
Has an accessible hotel in Llandudno and a number of accessible self-catering holiday properties in the UK.

Vision Hotels
Website: www.visionhotels.co.uk
Tel: 0845 603 0051
Email: enquiries@visionhotels.co.uk
A not-for-profit organisation, part of Action for Blind People. Runs four hotels that cater for people with visual impairments.

Travel agents

Access Travel
Website: www.access-travel.co.uk
Tel: 01942 888 844
Email: office@access-travel.co.uk
A tour operator that organises wheelchair-accessible 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
Website: www.accessibletravel.co.uk
Tel: 01452 729 739
Email: info@accessibletravel.co.uk
A tour operator that provides accessible accommodation and holidays for people with physical disabilities and mobility problems.

Can Be Done
Website: www.canbedone.co.uk
Tel: 020 8907 2400
Email: holidays@canbedone.co.uk
Arranges holidays worldwide for people with disabilities.

Disabled Holidays
Website: www.disabledholidays.com
Tel: 0161 804 9898
Arrange holidays in the UK and overseas in accessible properties. Equipment is available for hire.

Enable Holidays
Website: www.enableholidays.com
Tel: 0871 222 4939
Email: info@enableholidays.com
A specialist tour operator for people with disabilities. Offers holidays in several overseas locations. All holidays are audited to ensure their suitability.

Traveleyes
Website: www.traveleyes-international.com
Tel: 0113 834 6094
Organises group holidays for sighted people and people with vision problems.
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Arranging air travel

Gov.uk
Website: www.gov.uk/transport-disabled
Government website giving information about air travel for people with disabilities, as well as information about travelling on trains, buses, coaches and taxis in the UK.

Mr Airport Parking
Website: www.mr-airport-parking.co.uk
Email: support@mr-airport-parking.co.uk
An airport parking comparison website. The website includes a guide for disabled travellers.

Help with funding holidays

Family Holiday Association
Website: www.familyholidayassociation.org.uk
Tel: 020 3117 0650
Funds holidays in the UK for families in severe financial hardship and facing other difficulties like long-term illness.

Disability Aid Trust
Website: www.disabilityaidtrust.org.uk
Tel: 0800 028 0647
Email: secretary@disabilityaidtrust.org.uk
A charity that contributes towards the cost of hiring helpers so that disabled people can have a holiday.

Life After Stroke grants from the Stroke Association
Website: www.stroke.org.uk/Grants
If you are a stroke survivor experiencing financial difficulties, you may be able to apply for one of our Life After Stroke Grants worth up to £300. This could be used towards a holiday in the UK. If you are in touch with one of our Life After Stroke Services, you can talk to your local coordinator about financial assistance for holidays.

If you’re not in touch with one of our services, you will need to ask a health, social care or other professional to complete the application on your behalf. This could be your occupational therapist, health visitor or through another organisation that provides financial advice or support.
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About our information

We want to provide the best information for people affected by stroke. That’s why we ask stroke survivors and their families, as well as medical experts, to help us put our publications together.

How did we do?
To tell us what you think of this guide, or to request a list of the sources we used to create it, email us at feedback@stroke.org.uk.

Accessible formats
Visit our website if you need this information in audio, large print or braille.

Always get individual advice
Please be aware that this information is not intended as a substitute for specialist professional advice tailored to your situation. We strive to ensure that the content we provide is accurate and up-to-date, but information can change over time. So far as is permitted by law, the Stroke Association does not accept any liability in relation to the use of the information in this publication, or any third-party information or websites included or referred to.

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We rely on your support to fund life-saving research and vital services for people affected by stroke. Join the fight against stroke now at stroke.org.uk/fundraising.
Together we can conquer stroke.

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