

Holidays and stroke

Stroke Helpline: 0303 3033 100
or email: helpline@stroke.org.uk

Holidays are an important part of life, and this guide can help you with holiday planning if you have a health condition or disability after a stroke.

Types of holiday

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

If a stroke has left you with mobility problems, you may prefer to book with a specialist 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.

Turn to the 'Help with funding holidays' section at the end of this guide for some ideas on getting help with travel costs.

Coronavirus (Covid-19) and holidays

We know that holidays and travel may be affected by changing social distancing rules for some time. You need to check on the latest rules about your journey and destination before travelling. If you are more vulnerable due to a health condition, you will need to follow the advice you are given to reduce your risk of infection.

Air travel after a stroke

People often ask whether it is safe to fly after a stroke. There is no hard and fast answer to this. Most airlines will not carry someone within days of a stroke, but the rules vary between airlines and countries.

In the weeks after a stroke you are at the highest risk of another stroke. So the most important thing is to get individual advice from your hospital or GP about the likely risks of travelling.

In the UK, the Civil Aviation Authority suggests waiting 10 days after a stroke before a flight. But if your condition is stable you may be able to fly after three days. Each airline will have its own rules on flying with medical conditions, so you need to check with the airline before flying. You may be asked to provide a doctor's note or certificate.

Immediately after a stroke, you may need to attend check-ups and have medical treatment. The full effects of a stroke may take time to emerge. If you have a stroke caused by a clot (ischaemic stroke) you will be given medication to reduce the risk of blood clots. This needs to be taken regularly to be effective. So you need to plan carefully before travelling to make sure you have the right medications with you, and that you take them at the right times.

Carry medication in both your hold bag and hand baggage, in case any of your luggage gets lost. You might need help with these effects, and you might need to attend therapy sessions. So it's really important to get medical advice about your own situation before you travel.

If you have a stroke while on holiday, you might need to take a flight to get back home. If you have medical insurance, your insurance company should give you help and advice on medical treatment and getting back home. You can also contact the local British Consulate, which can offer advice and practical support.

Travel and blood circulation

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.

The best way to reduce the risk of a DVT on any long journey is to drink plenty of water, and stay active. Simple exercises like flexing your ankles or walking around will improve your blood flow. Do this regularly during the journey.

If you have had a DVT in the past, and you don't take anti-coagulation medication, ask your GP for advice before a long journey.

Some travellers wear compression stockings during a flight. However, you should not wear these if you have peripheral artery disease (PAD). This condition reduces blood flow in your legs, so wearing the stockings can reduce blood flow too much. Ask your GP or pharmacist for individual advice.

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.

European emergency number: 112

Dial 112 from anywhere in the UK or Europe to be connected to local emergency services.

Do I need travel insurance?

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

The Stroke Association has a partnership with specialist medical travel insurer AllClear Travel, who provide comprehensive cover to stroke survivors. 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. There are specialist travel insurers which provide cover for pre-existing conditions.

Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC)

The Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC) replaces the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) for most people. Despite the name, it allows you to receive state-provided healthcare only in European countries. Treatment is at the local 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.

How to apply

Visit gov.uk/global-health-insurance-card for full details of eligibility and a link to the free application page. A GHIC is free of charge. If you are charged a fee while applying online, leave the site, go to nhs.uk and search for GHIC.

Travelling with medication

If you carry medication or medical equipment like syringes in your hand luggage, you should bring documentation like a doctor's letter. You should also carry a copy of your prescription. 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. Make sure you take enough medication with you in case you are unexpectedly delayed.

If you are travelling across time zones, ask your pharmacist for advice about timing your medication.

Oxygen

It may be possible to take oxygen cylinders on board a plane. You need to contact the airline about this before you book.

Liquid medication

Current rules on liquids in hand luggage say that you can only take containers of up to 100ml. However, you can carry liquid medication of more than 100ml in hand luggage, as long as you have a doctor's letter. Airport staff may need to open the containers to screen the liquids at the security point. For more information about this, contact the airline.

Check before you fly

Always contact the airline or travel company for the latest guidance before you travel if you have any questions about health conditions or support for disabled travellers.

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 gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice

Where to get help and information

From the Stroke Association

Helpline

Our Helpline offers information and support for anyone affected by stroke, including family, friends and carers.

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

Read our publications

Get more information about stroke online at **stroke.org.uk**, or call the Helpline to ask for printed copies of our guides.

My Stroke Guide

The Stroke Association's online tool My Stroke Guide gives you free access to trusted advice, information and support 24/7. My Stroke Guide connects you to our online community, to find out how others manage their recovery.

Log on to **mystrokeguide.com** today.

Other sources of help and information

Advice about travelling with disabilities

AccessAble

Website: **accessible.co.uk**

Tel: **01438 842 710**

Email: **hello@accessible.co.uk**

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

Disabled Travel Advice

Website: **disabledtraveladvice.co.uk**

Offering advice on all aspects of traveling with a disability.

Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)

Website: **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: **sharedcarescotland.org.uk**

Tel: **01383 622 462**

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: 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: visitbritain.com

The official website of the British Tourist Authority with some information about accessible travel and accommodation. 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: disaway.co.uk

Tel: 01737 214 805

Email: lynnsimpkins@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.

Holidays with help

Website: 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: jumbulance.org.uk

Email: info@jumbulance.org.uk

Tel: 01582 765 423

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: 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

Activity breaks

3H Fund (Helping Hands for Holidays)

Website: 3hfund.org.uk

Tel: **01892 860 207**

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: 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: disabilitysnowsport.org.uk

Tel: **01479 788 770**

Email: admin@disabilitysnowsport.org.uk

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

Jubilee Sailing Trust

Website: jst.org.uk

Tel: **0238 00 2340**

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: 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.

Travel agents

Access Travel

Website: access-travel.co.uk

Tel: **07973 114 365**

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.

Disabled Holidays

Website: disabledholidays.com

Tel: **0161 804 9898**

Arrange holidays in the UK and overseas in accessible properties, including hotels, chalets, luxury breaks and cruises.

Enable Holidays

Website: enableholidays.com

Tel: **0971 222 4939**

A specialist tour operator for people with disabilities. Offers holidays in several overseas locations. All holidays are audited to ensure their suitability.

Traveleyes

Website: traveleyes-international.com

Tel: **0113 834 6094**

Organises group holidays for people with vision problems and sighted people.

Arranging air travel

Gov.uk

Web: 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.

Accommodation

Leonard Cheshire Disability

Website: leonardcheshire.org

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: 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.

Help with funding holidays

Family Holiday Association

Website: familyholidayassociation.org.uk

Tel: **020 3117 0650**

Email: info@hfaonline.org.uk

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

Disability Aid Trust

Website: 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.

Hiring mobility equipment for holidays

Mobility Equipment Hire Direct

Website: mobilityequipmentshiredirect.com

Tel: **0800 994 9000**

Hires out a range of mobility equipment such as wheelchairs and scooters. As well as UK hire, they have overseas branches so you can hire items at some destinations.

Mobility Hire

Website: mobilityhire.com

Tel: **0800 111 6234**

Email: sales@mobilityhire.com

Hires out a range of mobility equipment such as wheelchairs and scooters. You can use items for travelling abroad.

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

This guide contains general information about stroke. But if you have a problem, you should get individual advice from a professional such as a GP or pharmacist. Our Helpline can also help you find support. We work very hard to give you the latest facts, but some things change. We don't control the information provided by other organisations or websites.

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Every five minutes, stroke destroys lives. We need your support to help rebuild them. Donate or find out more at stroke.org.uk.

The Stroke Association is registered as a charity in England and Wales (No 211015) and in Scotland (SC037789). Also registered in the Isle of Man (No. 945) and Jersey (No. 221), and operating as a charity in Northern Ireland.