



Returning to Intimacy After a Stroke

Can I have a sexual relationship after a stroke?

Yes! Research has shown that masturbation or sexual activity will NOT cause another stroke. You may need to explore new ways to enjoy a satisfying intimate relationship.

Tips and Strategies

Fatigue

You may feel more fatigued after a stroke. Engage in sexual activity when you are well rested – such as in the morning or after a nap. Avoid initiating sexual activity after a meal as your body is using energy to digest.

Changes in Physical Ability

You may have weakness following your stroke and need to find new positions to accommodate these changes. Be patient and give yourself time, don't rush. Pillows and cushions can be used to support your body and allow you to stay in positions for longer amounts of time. For sexual positions you can try, see the on-line "Intimacy After Stroke" booklet by the Stroke Foundation of New Zealand.

Changes in Sensation

You may have changes in how things feel. Try having your partner focus on touching your unaffected side.

Communication

If your verbal communication is affected, think of other ways to communicate. For example, pointing at your heart could be a way of saying "I love you," and lighting a specific candle could indicate your wish to be intimate.

Fear

It is normal for couples to have fear around sexual activity following a stroke. Sharing your fears together with your healthcare team will help reduce anxiety and allow you to explore new dimensions of your relationship.

Hygiene

If you are experiencing incontinence, consider emptying your bladder before beginning sexual activity. Bathing or washing up may help you feel more relaxed. You may also want to keep extra towels close in case of drooling, or accidents.

Resources

- Canadian Heart and Stroke Foundation –
<https://www.stroking.ca/en/patient-info/sexuality-info/>
- **Stroke Foundation of New Zealand – Intimacy After Stroke Booklet**
<https://www.stroke.org.nz/resources/Sexuality-Booklet>