

LIFE
after STROKE

Stroke Support Group

Toolkit



Canadian Stroke Network

Réseau canadien contre
les accidents cérébrovasculaires

The Canadian Stroke Network (CSN) – one of Canada’s Networks of Centres of Excellence – is a unique collaborative effort that brings together researchers, students, government, industry and the non-profit sector. At present, the Network has more than **100** researchers at **24** universities across the country.

The Canadian Stroke Network is a not-for-profit corporation, governed by a Board of Directors and headquartered at the University of Ottawa.

The Network puts Canada at the forefront of stroke research through its multi-disciplinary research program, high-quality training for Canadian scientists and clinicians, and national and global partnerships.

The Canadian Stroke Network is dedicated to decreasing the physical, social and economic consequences of stroke on the individual and on society.

In pursuit of this goal, the Canadian Stroke Network aims to:

- Promote research excellence
- Train researchers and practitioners
- Maximize health and economic benefits
- Build national consensus on stroke policy
- Create added value through partnerships
- Promote research excellence

Life After Stroke – a special project dedicated to improving the lives stroke patients, their families and carers. Life After Stroke aims to provide access to services and high-quality information on stroke treatment, recovery and rehabilitation, stroke prevention and support.

Tools adapted with premission from the Autralian Stroke Foundation.

Contents

Welcome

- Providing support
 - Life After Stroke support groups
- Setting up a support group
 - What is a support group?
 - What kinds of support groups are there?

What support groups do

- Planning your support group
- Share the responsibility
 - Important questions to ask yourself

Getting Started

- Mission and beliefs
 - About your group
 - Mission
- Beliefs
- Working with people who have aphasia
- Guidelines
- Membership
- Decision making
- Sharing roles and responsibilities
- Key roles

Running your support group

- Day-to-day management
- Meeting times, frequency and location
 - When?
 - Where?
- Food and refreshments
- Planning your meetings
- Encouraging participation

Spreading the word

- Newsletters
- Posters and brochures
- Websites and social media
- Word-of-mouth
- Tips for engaging the media

Appendix: Tools and Resources

- Agenda
- Session plan
- Evaluation form
- Feedback form
- Venue checklist
- Media release
- Top 10 facts and figures on stroke



Welcome

Starting a stroke support group in your area is a way to provide a safe environment for people wanting to return to activities in the community.

Providing support

Stroke support groups play an important role in enabling stroke patients and their families move forward with their lives post stroke.

Life After Stroke provides support to strengthen groups in the community and build new groups throughout Canada.

Life After Stroke Support Groups

Life After Stroke support groups are supported through the Life After Stroke website, www.lifeafterstroke.ca; and receive support in the form of:

- Promotion on the website
- Branded templates
- Use of the Life After Stroke logos in conjunction with their own (where applicable)
- Media release templates for special announcements
- Resources and information
- Access to the Life After Stroke online web forum



Setting up a support group

Stroke support groups can help people with stroke by offering a caring and welcoming atmosphere, a new sense of community, and a place to share struggles or successes. It is especially important that people who feel socially isolated, who have difficulty adjusting to changes at home, or who have little home support, feel as though they are not alone.

Usually, support groups also provide more practical tips about other available stroke resources, such as where you can go for more help. This information can boost good health and improve quality of life.

What is a support group?

A support group is a gathering of people affected by stroke, brought together because of common experiences or challenges living with stroke. Typically, anyone affected by stroke can become a member of a support group.



What kinds of support groups are there?

There are many different kinds of support groups – from a casual chat over coffee to meetings with organized activities and guest speakers – and each operates in a unique way. Most groups meet regularly to share stories and information. You will need to decide where, when, and how frequently your group will meet.

Some groups choose to organize activities or guest speakers. Organized activities are a good way to provide group members with fun, as well as inform them about stroke-relevant issues and even challenge them in ways that are supportive and relevant to their needs. Guest speakers who are knowledgeable about topics such as nutrition, physiotherapy, leisure, and exercise can also be a great addition to your group's agenda.



What support groups do

There are many different kinds of support groups. Support groups vary greatly in what they do and how they operate. Most meet regularly to share information and allow members to share experiences. You will need to decide early on how regularly you plan on meeting, and what kind of structure you plan to use.

Planning your support group

First, check to see whether a stroke support group already exists in your area. This may require a little research. The Internet can be a valuable source of information, but you may also wish to consider:

- Hospitals
- Community centres
- Libraries

If there is no support group in your area that meets your needs, or if it is difficult to get to an existing group, or there is another reason that already-established support groups are unsuitable for you, consider starting your own.

Remember: some groups may have a very specific focus, such as keeping physically active or supporting parents whose children have had a stroke. Rather than start your own support group, consider approaching an existing one and suggesting expansion to meet the needs of a wider stroke population.



Share the responsibility

If possible, work with others. Starting a support group is a big job, so it is better to share tasks and responsibility.

Consider forming a committee to share important tasks and make sure that everything is done. (Not every stroke group has or needs a committee.)

Search your local area for people (carers, people living with stroke, health professionals, etc) who may be willing to help.

Important questions to ask yourself

Who will join my support group?

Are carers invited? Families or friends of people with stroke?

Are all people with stroke welcome, regardless of where they are in recovery?

What will my support group offer?

Organized activities or casual chitchat, or a combination of both?

Get together with other interested people and discuss the group's purpose and how it will run.

Where will my meetings take place?

Find a venue that is accessible to those with handicaps and close to public transportation. Aim for an inexpensive or free location.





Getting started

You have decided to start a support group. You have identified a need, searched your local community for allies and different kinds of help, possibly set up a committee to help you run the group, and found people who are interested in attending. What's next?

This section will help you consider the look and feel of your group, and its day-to-day management.

Mission and Beliefs

Some support groups find it helpful to have a written statement clearly defining the group's mission and beliefs. It's important not to rush into writing this document.

Consider the following areas:

About your Group

Include the type of person you are seeking for the group (e.g. people at a certain point in their recovery, their carers, partners, families, etc).

Mention the group's attitude toward new members.

- Is your group affiliated with any official stroke organizations or fellow support groups?

Also,

- When do you meet? How frequently?
- Provide a contact person for further information.

Mission

Although not every group needs one, a Mission statement can help keep your group on track by answering the following questions:

- What do you want to get out of the group?
- What do you hope others might get out of the group?
- Which activities are most important to you?

Defining the **Mission** as a group can be a challenging, but be careful not to rush this process. It's important that everyone agree and feel comfortable with the mission.



Beliefs

You can start to define the group's beliefs by opening a group discussion and asking each member what they believe the philosophy should be.

You can also try answering the following questions together:

Our group welcomes...

Who is your group intended for?

Our goal is to...

What do you aim to achieve? (See Mission)

Our group will support and encourage...

What would you like group members to walk away with?

Our group will uphold the following values...

Respect, compassion and integrity are three important ones – what else does your group believe to be valuable?

Samples

About Our Group:

The Robertson Stroke Support Group is made up of people living with stroke at any stage of their recovery, in addition to carers and family members. New members are always welcomed and encouraged.

Our group meets every two weeks, usually on a Thursday afternoon. For further information, contact Sue Barn at 555-555-5555.

Mission and Beliefs

Our group encourages all people affected by stroke to come together in a warm and accepting environment. Through group discussion, organized activities, and group outings, we aim to encourage independence, share experiences, and have fun!

Fostering an atmosphere of openness and positivity is very important to our group. Respect, compassion, and integrity are the rights of every member.

Members are welcome to share their stories as well as trade practical advice and tips.

Working with people who have aphasia

People with difficulty communicating, such as those with aphasia, may find it hard to understand written words or speech, or have trouble expressing their own words. Always be patient and remember that the person is doing their best to communicate.

People with aphasia know what they want to say. They are intelligent and inherently competent. It's important to recognize that aphasia has not changed their mental abilities or personality.

No two people with aphasia are alike – some have difficulty with only one area of communication, such as trouble speaking or being unable to remember nouns, but most have challenges in several areas.

Here are some general communication tips:

- Don't speak too quickly.
- Don't change topics too quickly.
- Reduce background noise.
- Give the person time to understand what you've said.
- Check that they understand what has been said.
- Ask if they need assistance

Defining acceptable behaviour: People sometimes have different ideas about what is acceptable in a group. Your group may choose to discuss behavioural guidelines orally or in writing, but it's important that you define these guidelines together, to ensure that everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

Guidelines

If you decide to write your guidelines down, the following example may be helpful.

Samples

“Our Philosophy”

- We will respect each other by listening, not interrupting each other, not making assumptions, and not putting people down.
- We will respect each member’s privacy by not sharing their stories with people inside or outside the group, unless we have their permission.
- We will be particularly careful not to insult or discriminate against any member of our group.
- We will turn cell phones off during the meetings. If they must be on, we will use them considerately.
- We will be on time for each meeting.
- As best we can, we will share the task of setting up before the meeting and packing up the end.
- We will support and encourage group members to the best of our ability.
- We understand that every individual has diverse needs, and that our support group cannot necessarily meet all of these needs. However, we will do everything we can to respect everyone’s opinion, and take all opinions into account.

Membership

Group membership and size

Depending how selective you are about who can benefit from your group, you may have formal or informal criteria for membership. Some stroke recovery groups welcome everyone, whether a person with stroke, their carer, or a family member; such a group would likely have flexible criteria.

You will need to bear in mind the cost of running a support group.

Most people should be willing to offer a small donation (\$2-5) to help cover the costs of refreshments or activities. The membership fee is something your committee, if you have one, may want to discuss.

Every support group is valuable to recovery regardless of its size, but size will affect the group's activities. Consider your stated Mission – what is your group's primary focus?



Smaller Groups versus Larger Groups

Smaller Groups

Benefits of a smaller group (5-15 members)

Easier to provide a close, individual feel; facilitates personalized support; it's possible to easily join another small group for special events, guest speakers, outings etc, to share costs.

Disadvantages of a smaller group

It may be harder to keep members actively engaged, and you will face difficulties if people don't attend meetings; more difficult to attract guest speakers.



Larger Groups

Benefits of a larger group (20 or more members)

Inviting guest speakers is more plausible, because a larger audience makes their time worthwhile; it's possible to have more variety regarding activities, outings, and special events; excellent format for online support groups (if you meet online, it's best to have many members).

Disadvantages of a larger group

A larger venue and catering capacity (if applicable) are required, which can be more expensive; more difficult to provide personalized information and support.



*We recommend that your group have a minimum of five members.

Decision making

The way you make decisions will depend on the size and structure of the group, in addition to the personalities of the committee members (if applicable) and of the group members. You may want to take your time considering how best to make decisions.

The two most popular ways of decision-making are by vote or by consensus.

By voting, you are asking group members to vote for or against a given proposition. Secret ballot votes may be best when there is a difficult decision to make, but a simple show of hands can be equally

effective. This method of decision-making is quick and simple.

Remember that people with aphasia may have trouble reading or writing and may need assistance from their carer or a fellow group member. Making decisions by consensus involves holding an open discussion until all group members have agreed. This process can give members the opportunity to explain their views, and encourages all to take responsibility in making the decision. Due to these factors, group members may be more satisfied with the final decision. However, making decisions by consensus can take longer and initially be more frustrating than voting.



Sharing roles and responsibilities

Whether you establish a formal committee or share the work informally, don't try to tackle everything by yourself. It is important for all members of the group who want to be a part of the committee to have an opportunity to do so. Passing roles and responsibilities out among your members will ensure that no one member becomes too tired or over-worked; rotating roles has the added benefit of ensuring that you always have more than one person who knows how to do a certain job.

If you are planning to use a committee structure, it helps to define each of the roles and establish rules about electing, appointing and standing down members. Ask yourself:

- Which roles does my group need?
- What are the responsibilities of each role?
- How will the roles be filled?
- How will I (or we) respond to a committee member who is neglecting their responsibilities?

It is important for all members who want to be part of a committee to have the opportunity to do so. This can be achieved by electing new committee members on a yearly basis.

Some examples of roles, which will differ according to the design and priorities of your support group are listed on the next page.

Remember: It's important for all members of the group who want to be a part of the committee to have an opportunity to do so.

Key Roles

Leader

Leaders are extremely important to a successful group. Leaders usually run meetings, support the decision making process and help to delegate tasks. They play a key role in setting the tone for the group. The leader is most often the face of the group. Group leaders are encouraged to facilitate equal sharing of stroke patient and stroke carers' stories to benefit, inform and support all group members.

Leaders (and committee members) are generally elected annually. The nominated leader or committee member will be listed as the contact for your support group on websites and public listings.

Secretary

The secretary manages paperwork, keeps records (member contact info, accident reports, written requests), and keeps minutes of meetings.

Treasurer

The treasurer handles all financial matters related to the group. They keep records of income and expenditures, manages the group bank account, and is the main contact for financial issues.

Publicity coordinator

The publicity coordinator writes and distributes press releases, maintains relationships with the media, and advertises for the group.

Activities coordinator

The activities coordinator organizes and plans activities according to the interests of the whole group, arranges visits from guest speakers, handles the logistics of group outings, and maintains public activity calendars.

Caterer

The caterer is responsible for providing/arranging nutritious snacks and refreshments for members.

Fundraising officer

The fundraising officer takes charge of raising funds to support the group (depending on your group's needs).





Running your support group

Now that you know what you need to start a support group, it's time to focus on ensuring the group runs smoothly. In the following pages you will learn how to structure your meetings formally or informally.

Day-to-day management

Plan your activities in advance

Many groups loosely plan the year's activities in advance. This allows members to arrange their schedules to participate in the events they care most about, and advance-planning encourages a balance with different kinds of topics and activities.

Discuss the following as a group:

- What do we aim to achieve in the year ahead?
- Does the group prefer formal or informal activities?
- Who is able to organize guest speakers or set up special equipment, such as a projector or computer?

Involve all members in planning activities.

For a group to be successful its activities need to cater to the interests of the whole group, not just a few individuals.

Some questions the group might want to talk about are:

- What did we talk about at the last meeting?
- What did we find most helpful?
- What would we change?
- Does the group feel supportive?
- Is there enough time for talking informally?
- Do we feel we are meeting our goals?
- How can we improve the meetings?
- Are there particular activities we might like to do?

Make a particular effort to include opinions from quiet members and people with aphasia.



Meeting times, frequency and location

When?

It is up to you and your group to decide how frequently you should meet. There is no rule that applies to every group.

You will also need to choose a day and time: midmorning can be a good choice because members will not be too fatigued. If you schedule your meeting for too early, members may not have enough time to get ready and arrive for the meeting.

In most cases, **one or two hours** is enough time for a satisfying stroke support meeting. Be sure to start and finish on time to show courtesy to members with pre-arranged transport.

Where?

There are several issues to consider when choosing a venue for your group. Many locations offer free meeting space, while other locations may charge.

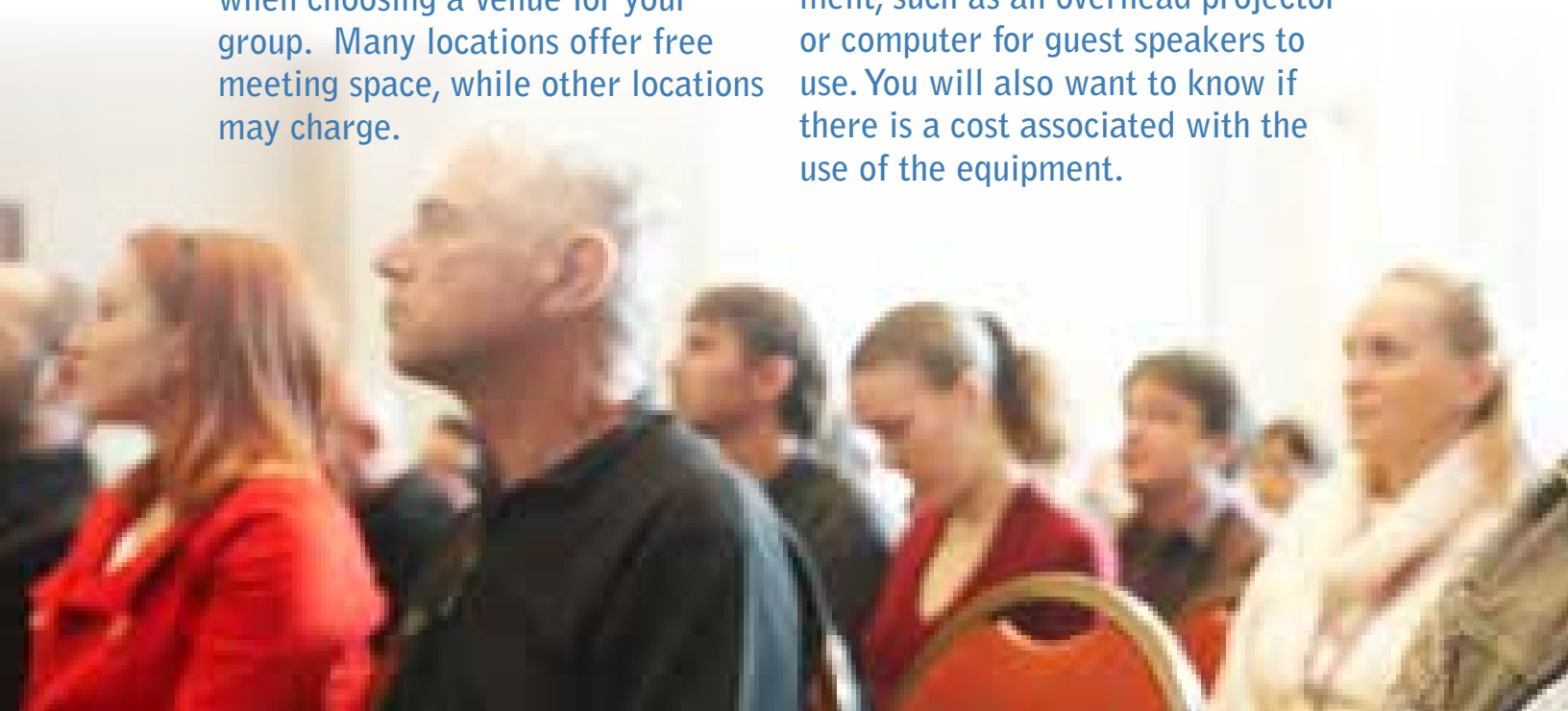
When choosing your group's venue, be sure to consider price, the type of activities you plan to run, and the needs of your members (wheelchair accessibility and proximity to public transportation may be especially important). Try to find a venue that will be available long-term.

You may want to approach a local hospital or community center to find out what is available in your area.

Some location ideas include:

- Hospitals
- Community health centres
- Libraries
- Schools
- Community halls
- Council buildings

Don't forget to ask your venue whether they have electronic equipment, such as an overhead projector or computer for guest speakers to use. You will also want to know if there is a cost associated with the use of the equipment.



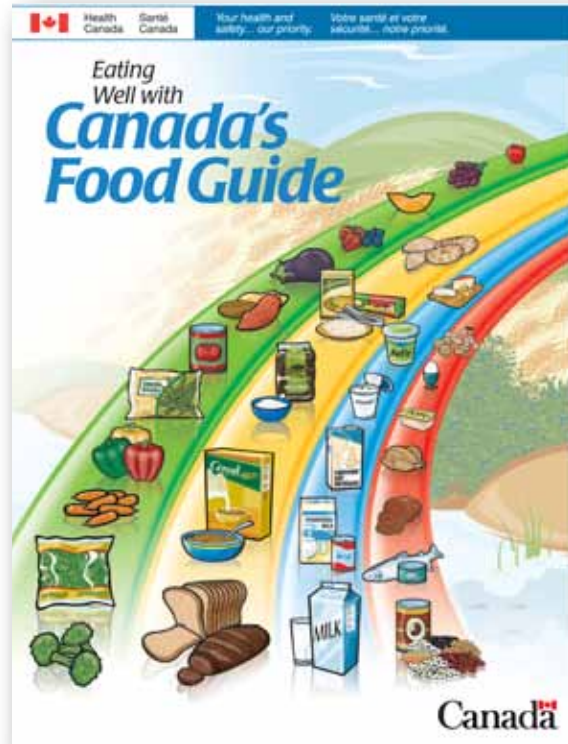
Food and refreshments

Sharing refreshments or a light lunch can be a fun, informal way to end a meeting. You may decide to sign-up sheet for members to bring or help with refreshments. Instead, you may ask for small donations to cover the cost of food and have one or two people organize this.

Try to keep the snacks healthy and low in sodium, fat, and sugar – a healthy diet is good for health and can help prevent a secondary stroke.

Some healthy snack ideas:

- Fresh fruit
- Hummus and fresh vegetables
- Yogurt with dried fruit and granola
- Unsalted nuts
- Rice cakes
- Granola bars
- Yogurt and granola
- Fruit smoothies



For more information on healthy eating and the **Canada Food Guide** visit Health Canada's website at: www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php

Remember: Check to find out if any members have from food allergies, or if they have problems chewing or swallowing.

Planning your meetings

You may decide to use meeting plan or agenda to help you plan your meetings. Some groups find these plans to be a useful way of keeping their meetings focused and running on time. While not mandatory, meeting plans/agendas can be formal or informal.

Meeting plans/agendas can be useful for keeping you on track - especially when it comes to regular items and time allocations for each item. Members may appreciate receiving a copy of the agenda before each meeting, so they know what to expect.

When preparing your meeting plan/agenda it is important to set a friendly tone for the meeting. Remember that a warm welcome is a great way to start the meeting off on the right note and will make members feel at ease. Similarly, an encouraging closing remark will leave members with a good impression and encourage an upbeat send-off.

Some group leaders like to open with an ice-breaking exercise to help members get to know one another. This is especially helpful in the early stages of your support

group, when members are unfamiliar with one another. Similarly, sharing accomplishments or inspirational stories (such as focusing on achievements) can be a great way to end off the meeting.

Don't forget to include positive milestones – birthdays, anniversaries, accomplishments – in your program.

Some ideas include:

- Sharing **milestones** such as birthdays and anniversaries.
- **Informal** time for mingling and refreshments.
- Ice-breaker **activities**
- **Sharing** accomplishments - large and small.
- Exchanging **helpful** resources and information.
- **Inspirational** quotes or readings.

***Visit Appendix B for a sample session plan.**

Encouraging participation

People are more likely to take part in a group when it is interesting to them and they find the information useful.

People in a group environment respond more positively when:

- Their opinions are respected and listened to
- Their strengths and interests are developed by the group's activities
- Their contributions are acknowledged in a genuine way
- They are valued as a member of the group
- The group's atmosphere is warm and encouraging

Make sure to involve everyone in important decisions, such as what activities you plan for each meeting, and include something bright, positive, or fun at every meeting. Acknowledging the accomplishments and milestones of members is a particularly effective way of boosting your group's morale.

Asking your members for feedback is a great way of keeping everyone involved, and making your members feel as though their opinion matters. Some groups choose to have an open, group discussion about their experiences.

It is important to create an atmosphere where everyone feels that they are contributing. It can be easy to focus on group members who are more outgoing (and sometimes possible to get distracted by people who are more outspoken or negative). Group leaders need to be alert to situations where members are not being included or valued.

A great way to gauge quieter group members is by offering feedback forms for all members to complete.

It can be useful to get feedback every few months to make sure you're staying on the right track. You can then use member feedback in your planning for the next year.

Your group will be more successful if members maintain a positive attitude.



Spreading the Word

People need to know of your stroke support group before they can support it!

Getting the word out about your group is an integral part of its success.

Newsletters

Many groups produce a regular newsletter for members and supporters. If you want others to know what you're doing, and encourage people to spread the word, you can distribute the newsletter to your local library, doctor's office, church, community health centre, pharmacies, members of parliament, and other community services.

A regular newsletter is a great way for members and/or supporters of the group to learn about the group's upcoming activities, member accomplishments, details about the group, and examples of past activities. It also gives potential members an idea of what the group does.

If you don't have the tools to create your own newsletter find out if local community newsletters or church bulletins would be willing to allow you to promote stroke awareness, your group and meeting times in their publications.



If you don't have the resources to create your own newsletter, find out about local community newsletters that already exist and contact them.

Posters and brochures

Posters and brochures about your group are a great way to raise awareness and encourage new members to join your group.

A poster containing basic information about your group such as what your group's goal is, and information on when, where, and how frequently you meet can be a great way to encourage new members to join.

Enlist the help of any artistically talented members of your group to make your brochure and poster designs more attractive.

Some great places to display your posters and brochures are:

- Hospitals, pharmacies, rehab centers, local doctors' offices
- Community centers, shopping centers, sports centers
- Places of worship, retirement communities

You know your own surroundings best. Is there a restaurant in the neighbourhood that is particularly popular? Special gatherings, like bingo nights, that attract many people? Put your local knowledge to use!



Don't forget to ask permission to display your materials first!

Websites and Social Media

The recent explosion of social media means that more and more people receive their news and communicate with one another electronically.

Creating a Facebook page, Twitter account, or website to share updates about your group's activities and schedule can be highly effective ways of reaching a large number of people.

The Life After Stroke website and Facebook page are great places to promote your group. Also, local council and health centres are often willing to promote your group on their websites. Don't be afraid to ask - organizations are usually very happy to help.

Share tips and promote your support group on Life After Stroke's website and Facebook page.



Find the Life After Stroke website at www.lifeafterstroke.ca, and "Like" the Life After Stroke Facebook page at: www.facebook.com/LifeAfterStroke.

Word-of-mouth

Word-of-mouth is still one of the most powerful promotional tools because it generally comes with a reliable, credible endorsement.

Begin with members and supporters of your group. Use meetings, regular communications and newsletters to publicize your group and encourage everyone to promote your group to people they know. Encourage them to tell their neighbours, friends, members of other clubs they belong to about your stroke group.

Ask health care professionals and community groups if they will distribute an email promoting your group, or ask them to recommend your group to any new stroke patients and their family members.

**Word-of-mouth is
your most
powerful promotion
because it comes
from trusted
sources.**

Don't forget to talk to your health care provider or physiotherapist and ask them to spread the word for you. Health care professionals are the first point of contact for stroke patients, and they a trusted source of stroke related information. Having them recommend your support group to patients can be highly effective in building your membership.



Tips for engaging the media

The media can be a powerful communications tool for your group. It is an effective way of letting people know about your support group and its achievements. Learning how to engage the media can be one of the most useful tools you learn to help advance your support group.

What's your story?

Before you approach local media with a story about your support group, think carefully about what will be interesting to other readers. Be prepared to explain why your story is important, relevant, and interesting.

It helps to approach media around an important event or milestone so the journalist has something to talk or write about. Is someone in your group celebrating an important birthday or anniversary? Has your group reached a milestone (for example, holding your 100th meeting), or are you holding a special activity to tie in to National Stroke Month?

The media likes to focus on stories with local context. Consider asking your members to write about the positive experiences they have had since joining the support group. How has the group benefited them? How might other people benefit by joining such a group?

The media often likes to focus on an individual or on a few people, because this provides a personal window into a story. Ask the members of your group how they feel about a potential interview, in case you are asked for a carer or person with stroke who is willing to share their story.

The more you can provide for the journalist, the better your coverage will generally be.

Some useful tips

In today's world of tight deadlines, media cut-backs and interactive online news, it is important to provide the media with as many useful resources as possible. The more you can provide for the journalist, the better your coverage will generally be.

Photos

A good picture can really can be worth a thousand words.

In most cases a local newspaper will not have the resources to send a photographer out to cover your story. That's where you need to step in and provide good quality photos for them.

Keep an eye on the pictures in your local newspaper, or even the publication you hope to find your story in; what kinds of pictures have they run in the past week? Ask yourself what made each of these pictures stand out or appeal to you. You want your pictures to tell the story.

Facts and figures on stroke

When promoting your group, speaking with media, or writing newsletter articles, providing up-to-date stroke facts and figures can be a valuable tool.

If people understand the impact of stroke on Canadians, they will appreciate your stroke recovery group in a new light.

The Canadian Stroke Network website is a good source for facts and figures on stroke.





Appendix: **Tools and Resources**

Now that you have the information you need to get started, this section provides you with the tools to make it happen.



Agenda

Meeting Date

1. Welcome and introduction of members & guests
2. Announcements
3. Thank you and acknowledgements (since last meeting)
4. Reading of minutes from last meeting
5. Social activities update
6. Program planning
7. Community service planning
8. Topics for next month's program
9. Old and new business
10. Reminder of next meeting's date & topics for discussion
11. Meeting adjourned

Additional agenda items

Depending on the nature of your group, you might want to include an administrative overview at each meeting.

Topics include:

- finances
- correspondence
- feedback

Special activities

Topics/activities

- Relaxation activity or exercise
- Guest speaker
- Group discussion
- Special presentation
- Outing

Sample agenda

The agenda is used in steering committee meetings to plan upcoming support group sessions.



Session plan

1. Start on time and provide a warm welcome
2. Introduce new members
3. Topics/activities:
 - Relaxation activity
 - Guest speaker
 - Discussion topics
 - Outing
 - Guest Speaker/presentation
4. Group announcements
5. Close meeting on time
6. Refreshments (tea / coffee / lunch / afternoon snacks, etc.)

Sample group session plan

The session plan is used as a guide for conducting support group sessions.



Evaluation form

We would like your feedback on how well the group is meeting your needs and how we can improve. Please complete the form below to tell us about your experience. Thank you for your feedback.

How often do you attend this support group?

Every month A few times a year Only once

Which of these factors determine whether you attend a meeting?

Topic Health Timing
 Transportation Speaker Other

How would you rate the length of the session?

Just right Too short Too long

Can you suggest another way that we could structure the sessions?

How well do you feel that the support group is meeting your needs?

Very well Well enough Somewhat Not at all

How can our group better meet your needs? Please help us by being as specific as possible.

Continued on reverse side.

Evaluation form (continued...)

How satisfied are you with the activities that have run this year?

___ Very satisfied ___ Satisfied ___ Dissatisfied

How would you rate the amount of time spent with activities and the amount of time spent sharing?

___ More time with activities ___ More time for discussion ___ Just right

Would you like to have an activity at every meeting?

___ Yes ___ No, we should spend time doing:

What suggestions do you have for improving guest speakers?

What kinds of activities would you like to have in the coming year?

What topics would you like to see in group discussions?

Please tell us how attending this support group has helped you.



Feedback form

We would like your feedback on how well the group is meeting your needs and how we can improve.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this feedback form.

Did you like today's topic?

Yes No

Suggestions:

Did you enjoy today's activity?

Yes No

Suggestions:

Did you enjoy today's guest speaker?

Yes No

Suggestions:



Venue checklist

Getting around: Does your venue have the following?	Yes / No	Date
Ramps for accessibility		
Accessible toilet facilities		
Floors suitable for people with walking aids		
Easily readable signs for those with vision impairment		
Minimal trip or slip hazards		

Emergency checklist: Did you locate the following?	Yes / No	Date
Do you know where the fire extinguisher is located?		
Do you know where the fire exits are?		
Do you know where the venue's first aid kit is?		
Do you know who to speak to in an emergency?		



Media Release:

Support Group Thrives in Life After Stroke

Release Date

The **[insert name of stroke group]** will **[insert short description of event]** on **[insert date]**.

This stroke support group, which has **[number of members]** members including people with stroke, their carers, and their family members, has been together since **[date]**.

The group meets every **[meeting frequency, e.g. week]** to discuss issues pertinent to people with stroke and to **[insert brief description of regular activities]**. The meetings allow members to share concerns and information about life after stroke, as well as encourage and support each other.

[Insert name], spokesperson for the support group, said new members are always welcome.

“Our meetings are open to anyone affected by stroke, whether they feel socially isolated, are having trouble adjusting, or just want to meet new people,” **[insert name]** said.

People living with stroke face a unique set of physical and emotional challenges, as well as lifestyle changes that affect their families and carers. **[Insert name of support group]** works to ensure that no one undergoes recovery alone.

According to the Canadian Stroke Network, support groups provide an essential opportunity for people affected by stroke to tell their stories, develop a sense of community, and get back on track after a stroke.

“Stroke support groups provide an invaluable service – on an emotional as well as a social level – to those who have had a stroke, as well as their friends and families,” said Katie Lafferty, Executive Director of the Canadian Stroke Network.

For more information, contact **[insert name and phone number of spokesperson]**.



Top 10 facts and figures on stroke

- 1** Stroke is the number one leading cause of neurological disability in Canadian adults, and the third leading cause of death.
- 2** Every year, there are 50,000 strokes in Canada – that's equivalent to one every 10 minutes.
- 3** Roughly 315,000 Canadians are living with the effects of stroke.
- 4** High blood pressure is the leading risk factor for stroke. A healthy blood pressure is 120/80 or less. Ways to reduce blood pressure include eating a healthy low-sodium diet and maintaining a healthy weight.
- 5** Every year, patients with stroke spend more than 639,000 days in Canadian hospitals, and 4.5 million days in residential care facilities.
- 6** Stroke survivors have a 20% chance of suffering a second stroke within two years of the initial one, which is why it is so important to control stroke risk factors.
- 7** 80% of people who have had a stroke report restrictions to their daily activities.
- 8** Half the people living with stroke do not have a meaningful activity to return home to.
- 9** Canada spends about \$2.5 billion annually on stroke-related expenses, including research, hospital care, and lost productivity due to disability.
- 10** "Studies suggest that if everyone with high blood pressure kept their blood pressure in a healthy range, the number of strokes each year would drop by 35-40%." - Dr. Mike Sharma, Deputy Director of the Canadian Stroke Network



Canadian Stroke Network

**Réseau canadien contre
les accidents cérébrovasculaires**

Additional information

Canadian Stroke Network

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Canadian Stroke Network

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