

### Myths about leisure activities

- **Leisure is impossible after having a stroke.** It is possible to resume your leisure activities after having a stroke. If needed, many adaptations exist to help you to return to your activities. It is important to talk to your rehabilitation health professional about your desires and needs. You can also consult our Assistive Devices module for more information
- **Leisure activities require a lot of skill.** Leisure is much more than just the activities that we do in our spare time. Leisure is first and foremost an enjoyable part of life. After a stroke it is possible for you to do leisure activities, even if you have some problems that were caused by the stroke. Most activities can be done without any previous skills, or involve skills that are easy to learn.
- **Healthy people are not interested in participating in activities with individuals who have had a stroke.** Some of the reservations you may notice in people are related to a lack of knowledge about stroke and about how to interact with someone who has had a stroke. It is important to have a conversation with relatives and friends about leisure activities and to inform them of what you can and cannot do. Because of your stroke they may also be experiencing a loss, and will need to adapt and learn new ways of interacting and participating in activities with you.
- **It's better to stay home...** It is better to find some continuity whenever possible with what you used to do before the stroke, whether in your daily habits or in leisure. For example, if you decide to stay home and play cards with your neighbor, while you normally used to go to your community center – you'll lose out on some of the social contacts that are important to maintain following a stroke. So, it is better to try to find ways of getting to the community center so that you can maintain your social activities, instead of just staying home.

### Why do leisure activities?

The benefits of leisure are numerous. Leisure benefits everyone's well-being and quality of life. Leisure also helps to improve physical and mental health, along with personal growth.

### Can I participate in my leisure activities after a stroke?

Leisure is a right for everyone. It is always possible to experience pleasant and positive moments in life, regardless of what state of health you are in. While the

types of leisure activities you did before the stroke might be different from those you do after your stroke, the feeling of wellbeing that you get from leisure activities should remain the same.

### **Can I participate in the same leisure activities as before?**

Sometimes it can be difficult to resume the exact same activities after a stroke that you enjoyed before the stroke. You may have to accept the fact that you will need to modify your way of doing your leisure activities so that they are easier and less demanding to engage in. As mentioned above, some assistive devices can help you achieve this.

### **Can I take the plane to travel?**

Most people can take the plane after a stroke. However, you may want to check if there are any specificities with your travel insurance company. The following link is an article from England and Wales entitled "Flying after a stroke" which includes information on: Airport Assistance, first hand experiences from stroke survivors, how Airports could improve their services and much more!

### **Who can help me resume my leisure activities?**

Your family and friends are an excellent source of support. Sometimes people don't know exactly how to help when faced with a loved one who has had a stroke. It is possible that your family and friends are waiting for a sign from you before they offer support. If you ask them for help, you may be pleasantly surprised. It is very possible that your family and friends are feeling overwhelmed by the situation and have difficulty supporting you in your leisure activities. If that is the case, there are various professionals who can help. Occupational therapists, physiotherapists, social workers, and psychologists are all able to help you resume your leisure activities. Also, some centers offer the services of recreational therapists. Don't hesitate to seek out these resources.

### **Are there any risks to participating in leisure activities?**

There are no additional risks that someone who has had a stroke faces in participating in leisure activities – as long as these activities are practiced in a manner that fits the person's abilities. Consult your physician or rehabilitation healthcare professional for the best advice on how to participate in leisure safely,

and with little effort. **\*Family member/friend:** It is important that you allow the person who has had a stroke the freedom to pursue pleasant activities without being overly protective.

### How to find pleasant and satisfying leisure activities in my life?

This section will offer you a structured way of finding an enjoyable leisure activity that suits your lifestyle. This process has been part of an educational program for the past 15 years for people who have lost their independence. It can be a helpful way to reflect about leisure choices. It is useful for the person who has had a stroke, family and friends, and for clinicians working in rehabilitation.

#### Steps to follow to help find pleasing leisure activities:

- **Step 1: Think about the role of leisure in your life** First, you have to ask yourself about the value of leisure for you. You have to believe that it is important for you. Your family and friends can help you find new pleasure in leisure. You have to think about what brought you pleasure and fun before the stroke, and then try to find activities you can do to get the same feelings. By clicking here you can find a questionnaire that may help you reflect on your feelings with respect to leisure. (Link coming soon waiting for author approval)
- **Step 2: Evaluate how much satisfaction you get from your current leisure activities** Assess the satisfaction that you get from your leisure activities and from how you spend your free time (Link coming soon waiting for author approval)
- **Step 3: Identify your current activities and interests in leisure** Now it is time to reflect on the things you like to do during your free time. Think about what activities are pleasant for you – from things as simple as watering your plants to more structured activities like golf. Leisure consists of both small and big activities. The important thing is the pleasure that these activities give you. Think about your leisure activities – more specifically about:
  - the activities that you enjoy
  - the activities that you do
  - the activities you used to do but stopped doing and would like to resume
  - the pleasure you derive from each of the activitiesAfter you have reflected on these things, you will be better prepared to decide on which activities you want to work on resuming.

- **Step 4: Think about what you expect from the leisure activities** Once your interests in leisure are clearer, it is helpful to understand the reasons why you prefer to do one activity over another. Some people like the socializing part most of all, while others like to push themselves to experience new challenges. If you have trouble sorting out the reason why you like certain activities more than others, try completing this quick test. (Link coming soon waiting for author approval).
- **Step 5: Identify where, how and with whom you will spend your leisure time** This step helps you think about where, with whom, when, and how you participate in activities. This step is useful for identifying the obstacles you may face during your leisure activities. The grid provided here (*link coming soon waiting for author approval*) will guide you through steps 5 through 8.
- **Step 6: Think of some of the obstacles you might face when engaging in your leisure activities** You have to think about concerns you have about resuming your favorite leisure activities and which of these are real and which are more likely based on misconceptions.
- **Step 7: Look for different ways to accomplish your leisure activities** Sometimes you have to think about doing your leisure activities differently. You may need special equipment or assistive devices, or you may need to find a more suitable place in which to do your preferred activity – one that is adapted for your needs.



For example, you may enjoy swimming but may need to find a pool that has special safety equipment and adaptations for someone who has a disability. Therefore, you might change the location of your activities for more suitably adapted locations. It is a

good idea to consult with a rehabilitation professional once you reach this step. Also, you may want to visit our [Assistive Devices](#) module for an example of equipment and adaptations that may make it easier to resume certain [activities](#).

- **Step 8 : Identify alternative [activities](#)** If you have come to the realization that you really cannot return to your previous leisure [activities](#), it is important to consider some alternative [activities](#) that can bring you the same pleasure. Here is an example: *Three people enjoyed walking in the forest and in nature in general. They no longer had the physical ability to take walks in the forest after the [stroke](#). The first person enjoyed the relaxation aspect of nature- so he chose to listen to relaxation tapes with sounds of nature. This new leisure satisfied him because he was still able to relax while enjoying some aspects of nature. The second person chose to paint drawings of nature to satisfy his interest of reflecting on nature. The third individual enjoyed the sightseeing and the fauna. So she decided to build a terrace in her backyard, where she could eat while enjoying the flowers and the trees. All three found alternatives to satisfy their interests in nature, but in different and unique ways. **The important thing is not the activity, but what it brings to you!***
- **Step 9 : Learn to integrate your [activities](#) into daily life** Once you have your leisure interests set, you now need to consider the knowledge and skills required to make these [activities](#) part of your life. This means that you may have to learn some new skills. Here again, seeking the help of a rehabilitation professional may be valuable. Family and friends are also an important source of support and help at this point. They can help you to focus on enjoying these [activities](#) rather than on doing them correctly.
- **Step 10: Persevere!** Even if the obstacles seem huge, keep going! You will congratulate yourself later. The support of family and friends is really important at this point.

*Information on this web site is provided for informational purposes only and is not a substitute for professional medical advice. If you have or suspect you have a medical problem, promptly contact your professional healthcare provider.*