

Learning About Emotional Changes After a Stroke

Overview

After a stroke, many people feel different without knowing why. For example, some people find it hard to control their emotions. They may cry or laugh for no reason. Or they may feel down or even hopeless.

Some people may find they're acting differently. They may act too quickly or on impulse. Or they may be more anxious and hesitant at times.

If these changes happen to you, they can be upsetting. And they can be confusing to you and your loved ones. But these changes may get better with time as your brain heals.

Let your loved ones know what's happening. Their support and understanding can help you deal with these feelings. And with time and support from the people around you, you can learn ways to adjust to life after a stroke.

How can a stroke affect your emotions?

After a stroke, some people feel like they have lost control of their emotions. These feelings can come from one or both of two causes.

A stroke can affect parts of the brain that control how you feel. You may have emotional reactions that are different from your normal ones. For example, you may have fits of crying or laughing that are out of your control.

Also, a stroke can leave you with upsetting body changes that take away some of your independence. For example, some people may feel:

- Sad or angry about the loss of the lifestyle they had before.
- Isolated by speech and language problems.
- Frustrated by the slow pace of recovery.
- Worried about the future.

These feelings are normal and expected. But if you think you might be depressed, tell your doctor right away. The sooner you know if you are depressed, the sooner you can get treatment.

How can you deal with your emotions after a stroke?

To deal with your emotions:

- Be easy on yourself. Let go of mistakes.
- Give yourself credit for the progress you have made.
- Make time for things that you enjoy.
- Join a stroke support group. Your rehab team or local hospital can help you find one.

Is depression common?

It is common to feel sad about changes caused by the stroke. Sometimes the injury to the brain from the

stroke can cause depression.

If you think you might be depressed, tell your doctor right away. The sooner you know if you are depressed, the sooner you can get treatment. Treatment can help you feel better.

Your doctor will want to know if in the past 2 weeks:

- You have lost interest or pleasure in doing things.
- You have been feeling sad, hopeless, or empty.

Your doctor may also ask about sleep troubles or changes in eating.

How can friends and family help?

Your loved ones can help you by following these tips:

- A person who has had a stroke may tend to have strong emotional reactions. Remember that these are a result of the stroke. Try not to become too upset by them.
- Don't avoid a loved one who's had a stroke. Contact with and support from family members is very important to recovery.
- Watch for signs of depression in people who have had a stroke. Urge them to talk to their doctor if they think they might be depressed.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

Where can you learn more?

Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/patiented>

Enter **E171** in the search box to learn more about "**Learning About Emotional Changes After a Stroke**".

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