

Return to work after stroke

What you need to know

- › A successful return to work starts with understanding how the effects of your stroke will impact you at work.
- › Support and good planning are needed to ensure things go smoothly.
- › There are services that can help you return to work, as well as services that can help if you cannot return.

Getting back to work

A successful return to work starts with understanding how changes in your physical abilities, thinking and communication will affect you at work. Fatigue can also impact on your return to work. When planning your return to work, keep in mind that fatigue can last longer than you expect.

If your stroke has caused problems with insight and awareness, you may not fully understand that some tasks are difficult for you to do. In this case, it is even more important to discuss your return to work plan with your doctor and health professionals.

Rehabilitation

If returning to work is one of your goals, talk to your rehabilitation team. They can help you to:

- › Review your strengths and compare these to what you need to do your job.
- › Re-learn or practise the key skills you need.
- › Learn strategies such as using verbal or written cues to improve concentration or memory.

A successful return to work may mean making changes to your duties and the hours you work. You may need specialised equipment or modifications to make your job easier. Your rehabilitation team may be able to talk to your employer about the support you need to return to work successfully.

Getting help

There are different types of assistance, depending on your situation.

Centrelink can tell you about income support and job seeking assistance. JobAccess provides people with disabilities advice about returning to work. Call them to discuss your eligibility.

Your employer's human resources and occupational health and safety representatives may also help. If you are a union member, a representative may be able to assist you negotiate what you need to return to work. If you have income protection or life insurance, even as part of your superannuation, you may be able to get help under your policy.

There are private services that specialise in return to work. Insurers may cover the costs of these services. Some employers may choose to assist with these costs. Employers may also choose to cover the cost of equipment and modifications at work.

You can ask your general practitioner about referral to appropriate allied health services to help you return to work.

Medical clearance to return to work

Ongoing medical problems may prevent you from being safe or well enough to return to work. Get medical clearance from your doctor stating that you can perform your job safely and return to work. Your treating team may recommend changes in hours or responsibilities. Having this information in writing can help you communicate with your employer.

Discrimination in the workplace

If you believe you have been treated unfairly due to physical or mental disability, contact the Fair Work Ombudsman for advice. You can also seek representation from your union or a lawyer.



The Stroke Foundation partners with the community to prevent, treat and beat stroke. We do this through raising awareness, facilitating research and supporting stroke survivors.

Contact us

 **StrokeLine 1800 STROKE (1800 787 653)**

 strokefoundation.org.au

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You might not be able to return to the same job

For some people, returning to the same job and employer may not be possible. Some stroke survivors move into a different role in the same industry, while others make bigger changes. Your capacities may have changed, but it is important to remember the qualities that previously made you successful at work can make you successful in a new role.

If returning to paid work is not possible, you will need help to plan for how you will manage. You may need to apply to Centrelink for assistance and see a financial planner or counsellor. You may also need to think about how you will manage the personal impact of not being able to return to paid work. You may wish to study, do volunteer work or try new activities.

Many stroke survivors experience major life changes, including changes in their working life. This often involves loss, but sometimes it also means finding a new path with new opportunities.

More help

StrokeLine's health professionals provide information, advice, support and referral. Call 1800 STROKE (1800 787 653).

Email strokeline@strokefoundation.org.au

Join Australia's largest stroke community for information and support.

enableme.org.au

Centrelink

Call 132 850 Newstart Allowance

Call 132 717 Disability

Call 136 150 Jobs, Education and Training

Visit humanservices.gov.au/customer/subjects/disabled-ill-or-injured-and-looking-forwork

JobAccess

Call 1800 464 800

jobaccess.gov.au