

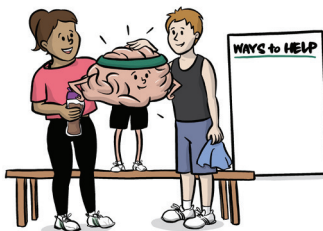
How you can help

You don't need special training to support someone with an invisible disability. Small acts of **kindness and understanding can make a big difference.**

Ways to help:

- › Be patient. Give extra time to speak, think, and respond.
- › Repeat things calmly and clearly.
- › Offer breaks when needed.
- › Change activities so everyone can join in.
- › Don't assume – ask how you can help.
- › Believe them, even if you cannot see the struggle.
- › Treat them with kindness and respect, just like everyone else.

Other ways you can help



More help

Find more information and answers to your questions about childhood stroke.

strokefoundation.org.au/childhoodstroke

StrokeLine's nursing and allied health professionals provide information, advice and support. StrokeLine is a free and confidential service.

Call **1800 787 653**, Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm, AEST. Email: strokeline@strokefoundation.org.au

Kids Helpline provides free telephone and online counselling services for children and young people.

Call **1800 55 1800**. [Kidshelp.com.au](https://kidshelp.com.au)

About Stroke Foundation

Stroke Foundation partners with the community to prevent strokes, save lives and enhance recovery. We do this through raising awareness, facilitating research and supporting survivors of stroke.

Our thanks go to all donors who contributed to this work, with particular thanks to the Barr Family Foundation for their generous support.



SF2164_0726



What you can't see

Invisible disability after childhood stroke

This booklet is for anyone who knows a child who has had a stroke, such as teachers, sports coaches, friends, or family. It explains invisible challenges and how you can help.



Scan here to learn more about childhood stroke.

Scan here to view our video
*What you don't see –
Understanding invisible disabilities
after childhood stroke.*



What is a stroke?

A stroke is when blood cannot get to all parts of the brain. If this happens, the brain can be injured.

When the brain is injured, it may not work the same way. Walking, talking, thinking, seeing or feeling can change. Learning and playing can change too.

Strokes can happen at any age – even before birth. In Australia, up to 120 babies and 400 children have a stroke each year.

How does stroke affect the brain?

The brain controls everything we do. This includes walking, talking, feeling emotions and thinking. A stroke can affect any of these things. Every stroke is different.

Some children have changes you can see. They might move differently or use special equipment.

Other children have changes you cannot see. We call these invisible disabilities.



What are invisible disabilities?

Invisible disabilities are hidden. Many children who have had a stroke look fine on the outside, but they still struggle every day.

Common invisible challenges after stroke include:

- **Fatigue** – deep tiredness that rest does not fix. It can affect the body, thinking, emotions and senses.
- **Thinking** – trouble with memory, focus, solving problems or learning new things.
- **Communication** – trouble with how they talk or understand speech, or read and write.
- **Vision** – changes to how well or how much they can see.
- **Sensory overload** – from loud sounds, bright lights, or busy places.
- **Emotions** – feeling worried or sad, or finding it hard to manage feelings.

Sometimes people do not believe these struggles are real. But invisible disabilities are real. Just because you can't see it does not mean it is not there.

