Stroke Recovery at Home: A National Practice Module

Supporting stroke recovery and preventing another stroke at home.

Why this module matters. More than 795,000 Americans have a stroke each year, and about one in four of those strokes is a repeat stroke. Recovery and prevention both happen largely at home.

About this module

This module gives teams a shared, evidence-based approach to supporting stroke recovery and preventing another stroke at home. It draws on current federal rules and national guidance, and it ends with a checklist that agencies, clinicians, and families anywhere in the United States can adopt.

Item	Details
Who it is for	Family caregivers, home care aides, nurses, and therapists
Format	6 units, case scenarios, a knowledge check, and a national checklist
Time	About 1.5 hours
How to use it	Caregivers use Units 3 to 6. Clinicians and agencies use all units.

Learning objectives

After completing this module, learners will be able to:

1. Describe stroke nationally.
2. Understand rehabilitation options.
3. Help prevent another stroke.
4. Provide safe daily care.
5. Communicate with a person with aphasia.
6. Support mood and the caregiver.

Scope. Aides and family caregivers observe, support, and report. Clinical assessments, medication changes, and treatment decisions belong to licensed clinicians. Follow your state scope-of-practice rules and agency policies.

Unit 1. The national picture

Measure	Figure	Source
Strokes each year in the U.S.	More than 795,000	CDC
First or new strokes	About 610,000	CDC
Recurrent strokes	About 185,000 a year (the rest)	CDC (calculated)
Share of cardiovascular deaths from stroke	1 in 6 (17.5%, 2022)	CDC
Impact	A leading cause of serious long-term disability	CDC

About one in four strokes happens to someone who has had a stroke before, so preventing another stroke is a central goal of home care.

Unit 2. Rehabilitation after stroke

Setting	What it offers
Inpatient rehabilitation facility	Intensive therapy, usually 3 hours a day, for people who can take part
Skilled nursing facility	Less intensive therapy and nursing care
Home health	Therapy and nursing at home for homebound people
Outpatient therapy	Physical, occupational, and speech therapy visits

Recovery is often fastest in the first months but can continue for much longer. Daily practice of therapy exercises at home makes a difference.

Unit 3. Preventing another stroke

Risk factor	What helps
High blood pressure	Medicines daily; home readings as directed
Atrial fibrillation	Blood thinners as prescribed; report bleeding or falls
Cholesterol	Statins or other medicines as prescribed
Diabetes	Blood sugar control (see the Diabetes module)
Smoking and alcohol	Quit smoking; limit alcohol
Activity and diet	Regular movement as able; less salt; more fruits and vegetables
Medicines	Take antiplatelet or other prevention medicines every day as prescribed

BE FAST. Call 911 for any new stroke sign: Balance loss, Eyes (vision change), Face drooping, Arm weakness, Speech difficulty. Time matters: note when symptoms started.

Unit 4. Daily care and safety

Need	How to help
Weakness on one side	Approach and place items on the stronger side unless therapists advise otherwise; protect the weak arm
Falls	Use prescribed devices; clear paths; supervised walking
Swallowing	Follow the speech therapist's texture advice; sit upright
Skin	Reposition; check pressure areas
Bladder and bowel	Scheduled toileting
Neglect of one side	Remind gently to look and turn toward the affected side

Unit 5. Communication after stroke

Aphasia affects speaking, understanding, reading, or writing. It does not affect intelligence.

- Speak slowly in short sentences; do not shout.
- Give time to answer; do not finish sentences unless asked.
- Use yes or no questions, gestures, pictures, and writing.
- Reduce background noise.
- Ask the speech therapist for a communication plan.

Unit 6. Mood and the caregiver

- Depression is common after stroke and slows recovery. Report sadness, withdrawal, or hopelessness.
- Emotions may change quickly, with sudden crying or laughing; this can be part of the stroke.
- Caregivers need respite, training, and support. Use the Caregiver Wellness module.

Case scenarios

Case 1. Blood pressure readings

Mr. M's home readings are often above 160 since he stopped a medicine he "didn't like."

- What is the risk?
- What should happen?

Discussion: Higher risk of another stroke. Report to the clinician the same day; never stop medicines without advice.

Case 2. Frustrated with words

Mrs. N cannot find words and becomes upset.

- How can caregivers help?

Discussion: Be patient, use yes or no questions and pictures, reduce noise, and follow the speech therapist's plan.

Knowledge check

1. How many strokes happen in the U.S. each year? *(More than 795,000)*
2. What does BE FAST stand for? *(Balance, Eyes, Face, Arm, Speech, Time)*
3. Name three ways to prevent another stroke. *(Blood pressure control, medicines, quitting smoking, diabetes control, activity)*
4. Does aphasia affect intelligence? *(No)*
5. Why report low mood after stroke? *(Depression is common and slows recovery)*

National Stroke Recovery at Home Checklist

This checklist turns national stroke prevention and recovery practice into one tool for families, agencies, and clinicians. The “National basis” column shows where each item comes from. Adapt it to your state rules and policies.

Name or ID	Date	Completed by and role
Agency or organization	Reviewed by	Next review date

A. Prevent another stroke

Action	National basis	Done	Notes
Blood pressure goal and home readings in the plan	National stroke prevention guidance	☐	
Prevention medicines taken daily	National stroke prevention guidance	☐	
Diabetes, cholesterol, and smoking addressed	National stroke prevention guidance	☐	
Everyone knows BE FAST and calls 911	CDC	☐	

B. Recovery

Action	National basis	Done	Notes
Rehabilitation setting and therapy plan in place	Medicare; best practice	☐	
Home exercise program practiced daily	PT and OT plan	☐	
Swallowing plan followed	SLP plan	☐	
Communication plan for aphasia	SLP plan	☐	

C. Safety and support

Action	National basis	Done	Notes
Fall prevention plan	CDC STEADI	☐	
Skin and continence care	NPIAP; best practice	☐	
Mood monitored; depression reported	Best practice	☐	
Caregiver training and respite	Medicare caregiver training services; NFCSP	☐	

Completed by: signature	Printed name and title	Date

Reviewed by: signature	Printed name and title	Date

Sources and further reading

CDC: Stroke Facts (cdc.gov)

CDC STEADI Pocket Guide (cdc.gov)

Rural Health Information Hub: Caregiver Training Services (ruralhealthinfo.org)

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