

Five Common Questions About Sex after Stroke

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Why don't I feel like having sex anymore?

There are many reasons why your libido may have changed. Medication can decrease libido, as can depression, which is a common side effect of stroke. Fear that your partner will no longer enjoy sex with you, that sex will be painful, or that you will not be able to perform the way you once did may also result in you or your partner feeling less interested in sex after a stroke. It is important to talk through these issues with your partner, and also consider talking with a counselor. It is also possible that with the many changes after a stroke, such as the stress of recovery and new daily responsibilities, you may be too tired for sex. If this is causing tension in your relationship, try taking some simple steps to make it a priority in your routine. Put time aside to have sex when you are well rested and energized. It's okay if you have to put chores aside to make time for sex. For many people, sex is part of a healthy relationship, which is beneficial for your happiness, bonding as a couple and recovery.

Why am I having trouble getting aroused and/or achieving an orgasm?

Some medications can reduce erectile function or vaginal lubrication. You should talk to your doctor before taking medications like Viagra. Lubricants are also available from your pharmacy, which can help. Medication for high blood pressure can also make it harder for some people to achieve erection or orgasm. If this is the case for you, it may be helpful to have sex before you take your daily medications to avoid these issues - but check with your doctor first to make sure this is a safe option for you.

Will I have another stroke during sex?

It is highly unlikely that you will have another stroke during sex, but this is a common concern among survivors and their partners. It is normal for your heart to beat faster and for you to breathe faster during sex. If you have any medical concerns before resuming your sexual relationship, consult your doctor. Many people feel uncomfortable talking about sex with their

doctors. But, remember that it is their job to both keep you healthy and help you achieve your highest possible quality of life. It is normal and healthy for sex to be a part of that conversation.

Is it possible to have sex with a catheter?

Ask your doctor if your catheter can be removed and reinserted after intercourse. If it cannot be removed, men can fold the catheter back over the erect penis and cover it with a condom. The use of pre-lubricated condoms can decrease the irritation between the catheter and penis.

Women can temporarily tape the catheter to the abdomen or thigh so the catheter will not be accidentally pulled out or be in the way. The female can use a water-soluble lubricant such as KY jelly to prevent tugging on the catheter (1).

What if my partner and I can't have sex the way we used to?

Changes to you physical capability or sense of touch may sometimes mean that sex will have to change between you and your partner, but that does not mean it has to stop. Communication is essential between you and your partner as you explore new likes and dislikes. Remind your partner about these changes so you can work through them together. New positions, devices, and techniques can all be part of returning to healthy levels of intimacy with your partner after your stroke.

Sources:

1. R. Dick, Intimacy After Stroke. *Stroke Foundation of New Zealand*.