

Spasticity after stroke



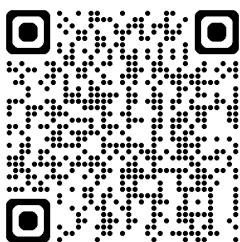
**Information for people in our care from our
Stroke Sub-acute Rehabilitation Unit**

Integrated Community Stroke Service (ICSS)

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Stroke Sub Acute Rehabilitation Unit (SSARU)

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What is spasticity after stroke?

Spasticity is caused by changes in muscle tone after a stroke.

Muscle tone is the normal, gentle tension in your muscles that helps you hold your body upright and move. After a stroke, the brain may have difficulty controlling this muscle tone. This can cause muscles to become tighter than normal. This tightness is called spasticity.

Spasticity can affect one muscle or a group of muscles.

What problems can spasticity cause?

Spasticity can make it harder to move your joints.

Tight muscles can resist stretching, which reduces how far a joint can move. Over time, joints may become stuck in one position and feel stiff or difficult to move.

Examples include:

- A wrist curling inwards.
- An arm staying bent and held close to the chest.



Spasticity affects people differently. Some people feel mild stiffness. Others may have more severe symptoms, such as:

- Pain.
- Muscle spasms.
- Clonus (uncontrolled, bouncing movements).

How is spasticity treated?

There is no cure for spasticity, but symptoms can be managed. Treatment usually includes therapy and regular self-practice. This may involve:

- Stretching exercises.
- Weight-bearing exercises.
- Strengthening exercises.
- Splints.



Medications may also help some people. These must be discussed with a prescribing clinician, as they are not suitable for everyone.

Preventing joint stiffness

Preventing joint stiffness is better than treating it after it develops.

Your physiotherapist or occupational therapist will give you exercises that are specific to you. It is very important to complete these exercises every day.

Even if you currently have good movement, continuing your exercises daily can help prevent stiffness from developing or getting worse.



Changes in spasticity and triggers

Spasticity can change from day to day. Some days it may be better, and other days it may be worse.

Certain things, called triggers, can increase spasticity.

It can be helpful to notice patterns in your spasticity. If triggers make your spasticity worse, daily activities such as walking, using the toilet, washing and dressing may be more difficult on those days.

When to ask for help

If spasticity is affecting your daily life, talk to:

- Your physiotherapist.
- Your occupational therapist.
- Your medical professional.

They can discuss other treatment options that may be available to support you.

Let us know what you think and get involved

Telephone: 0300 124 5300*

Email: sirona.hello@nhs.net

Website: [Link to Sirona website \(sirona-cic.org.uk\)](http://sirona-cic.org.uk)

*Calls from landlines are charged up to 10p per minute; calls from mobiles vary, please check with your network provider. This is not a premium-rate number.

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