



CANADIAN STROKE BEST PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS

Rehabilitation, Recovery and Community Participation Following Stroke Part One: Stroke Rehabilitation Planning for Optimal Care Delivery 7th Edition, 2025

Box 1: Eligibility Criteria for Stroke Rehabilitation

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Box 1: Eligibility Criteria for Stroke Rehabilitation

The following criteria have been developed as part of the Canadian Stroke Best Practice Recommendations to provide guidance and increase consistency for key elements that should be considered in decision-making regarding stroke rehabilitation for individuals with stroke. Criteria for access to rehabilitation services should be agreed upon by all relevant individuals in each region, be clearly stated and communicated to all referral sites to improve the individual with stroke's access and admission to stroke rehabilitation programs in an efficient and transparent manner. This applies to all rehabilitation settings, including inpatient rehabilitation, outpatient and community-based rehabilitation, and home-based rehabilitation. Refer to Section 5 for information on stroke rehabilitation in long-term care settings.

System Characteristics: In order to optimize access and benefits of stroke rehabilitation for individuals with stroke, their families and caregivers, there are several structural and system components that should be established. These may include:

- Efficient and transparent referral process for access to stroke rehabilitation across settings.
- Standards for time from receipt of referral to decision regarding intake to rehabilitation (ideally 24-48 hours).
- Rehabilitation professionals knowledgeable about stroke rehabilitation should be responsible for reviewing intake applications.
- Family members and caregivers should be included as part of the rehabilitation process, including decisions regarding type and location of rehabilitation where appropriate.
- Availability and accessibility of the appropriate type and level of rehabilitation services and resources across geographic regions.
- Availability of early supported discharge (ESD) programs and criteria for the individual with stroke who is an appropriate candidate.

General Inclusion Criteria for Stroke Rehabilitation

- All individuals with acute or recent stroke:
 - Who require inpatient or outpatient interdisciplinary rehabilitation to achieve functional goals to improve independence;
 - Who would benefit from interdisciplinary rehabilitation assessment and treatment from staff with stroke expertise ([refer to Recommendation 1.0.i for list of team members](#));
- And,**
 - Whose stroke etiology and mechanisms have been clarified and appropriate prevention interventions started (exceptions noted below under 'medically stable').
- Goals for rehabilitation can be established and are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely.
- The individual with stroke is **medically stable, meaning that:**
 - A confirmed diagnosis of stroke has been identified, although the mechanism or etiology may not be initially clear, such as in cryptogenic stroke; these situations should not cause delays in access to rehabilitation;
 - All medical issues and/or comorbidities (e.g. excessive shortness of breath, blood pressure stability, cardiac issues and congestive heart failure) are being managed and are not precluding active participation in the rehabilitation program;
 - All key medical investigations have been completed **and planned** follow up appointments are scheduled by time of discharge from acute care.
- The individual with stroke demonstrates the ability to participate, which includes:

- Tolerance and endurance to participate in the program demands/schedule;
 - Ability to follow at minimum one-step commands, with communication support if required;
 - Sufficient attention, and short-term memory to progress through rehabilitation process.
- The individual with stroke has consented to treatment in the program and demonstrates a willingness and motivation to participate in the rehabilitation program.

General Exclusion Criteria for Stroke Rehabilitation

- Medically unstable.
- Severe cognitive impairment that prevents the individual with stroke from learning and actively participating in therapy.
- Behaviour that is inappropriate and putting self or others at risk, such as physical and verbal aggression.
- Not willing to participate in program.

Determining if an Individual With Stroke is a Suitable Candidate for Outpatient (Hospital or Home-Based) Rehabilitation:

- The individual with stroke meets the criteria for rehabilitation candidacy, medical stability, and rehabilitation readiness as defined above.
- The individual with stroke's current medical, personal care, and rehabilitation needs can be met in the community.
- The individual with stroke can attend therapy alone or if assistance is required a caregiver is available to attend therapy sessions.