



**STROKE RECOVERY ASSOCIATION  
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA**

RECOVERING FROM A STROKE

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**A GUIDE FOR STROKE SURVIVORS,  
FAMILIES, & CAREGIVERS**

STROKERECOVERYBC.CA

## Stroke Recovery Association of BC

The Stroke Recovery Association of BC (SRABC) is a non-profit organization. We have been offering information and programs since 1979 for stroke survivors after they leave hospital. We are committed to assisting stroke survivors and their caregivers throughout the province to improve their overall quality of life. Our vision is that every stroke survivor in BC has respect, inclusion, and support in their home community.

*To learn more please go [strokerecoverybc.ca](http://strokerecoverybc.ca)*

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### Our Message

## *There is Life After Stroke*

After more than 30 years of helping stroke survivors and their caregivers in BC we have learned some vital lessons that we want to share with you:

Never give up hope and never stop trying. We have seen with our own eyes that being determined to get better makes a big difference. You may never fully recover but you can keep on improving.

There is life after stroke. Many stroke survivors go on to have successful and enjoyable lives. They learn to make the most of the abilities they have.

Support is very important. Family and friends play a huge role. The support of other stroke survivors and their understanding and encouragement really helps. Caregivers also need support.

You need to set goals. As long as you achieve some of them you are moving in the right direction. If you fail then break your goals down into smaller steps.

Never give up hope and never stop trying. We can't say that often enough.

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We hope you find the information in this booklet useful. If you have further questions after reading, please contact us:

#### STROKE RECOVERY ASSOCIATION OF BC

**T.** 604.688.3603                      301 - 1212  
**TF.** 1.888.313.3377                West Broadway,  
**E.** [office@strokerecoverybc.ca](mailto:office@strokerecoverybc.ca)    Vancouver, BC,  
**W.** [strokerecoverybc.ca](http://strokerecoverybc.ca)        V6H 3V1, Canada



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## RECOVERING FROM A STROKE

How well you recover from a stroke depends upon many factors, including how much and which parts of your brain were damaged, and your health before the stroke. Doctors can provide surgery, medication and other treatment. The work you do with your stroke rehabilitation team in the hospital, rehabilitation centre and in the community is very important to your recovery.

### WE CAN HELP

Here are a few useful guidelines to help you get the most out of your rehabilitation:

- » **Rest:** Tiredness and fatigue are common after a stroke.
- » **Simplify:** Keep activities and information as simple as possible.
- » **Repetition:** Learning after stroke requires repeating of information and practice of skills.
- » **Structure:** A daily and weekly structure and routine are helpful.
- » **Consistency:** Do things the same way each time.
- » **Learn to Compensate:** You have to adapt and change from past ways of doing things. For example use a day-timer or calendar to help you to remember things.

## WHAT IS A STROKE?

A stroke is a brain injury caused by:

- » Blood flow to the brain being blocked
- » A blood vessel bursting in the brain

When blood stops getting to your brain, the brain cells don't get the oxygen they need. Bleeding in the brain also damages brain cells.

Blockages and bleeding cause brain cells to stop working properly or to die.

## THE HUMAN BRAIN

The brain is the most complicated organ in your body. It is a network of special cells that are constantly sending signals and messages from one part to another. It controls everything you do. It is responsible for your movements and helps you to walk and to keep your balance. It makes sure that you know where you are going, and that you don't get lost. It controls memory and awareness. It helps you to recognize and remember things, like who the members of your family are. It controls your senses, so you can hear and understand what others are saying to you. It helps you to see what is around you and to understand what you see. It controls your personality and how you behave. All of your thoughts, feelings and emotions come from your brain. It helps you to make decisions. It governs communication including your speech, reading and writing. It even controls life support systems, like breathing and eating.

Your brain is divided into two halves called the right and left hemispheres and four different areas called lobes. Each of these parts is in charge of a different part of your functioning. Having a stroke can affect you in many different ways. It all depends on

1. The part of your brain that is damaged
2. How serious the damage is

## UNDERSTANDING THE BRAIN

It helps to understand how the brain works if you think of it as the workforce of a company. The company runs at peak efficiency when all the parts are working.

### *Vice Presidents*

Up at the front of the company (frontal and temporal lobes) there are several vice presidents. They make the plans for the company; they decide who's going to do what, and when. As things get underway, they get feedback or information as to how well it is going and they judge it - "that looks good or not so good"; and they make further decisions - "change that, keep this"; and show appreciation or annoyance. So, up at the front you have planning, organization, decision making, judgment and appreciation.

### *Managers*

In the middle (parietal lobes) are the managers and each of the managers runs their own department. On the left side of the brain is a speech department (which moves the tongue, lips and throat muscles); a language department (finds the words you want, know what the words mean) and a motor department (moves the right arm and right leg). On the right side is another motor department (moves the left arm and left leg); and a spatial reasoning department - (allows you to find your way around a building, know where you are when driving a car, right down to the basics such as getting your arm through a sleeve). Also over there is a music department and a few incidentals. In a very simplified view, the right side is the picture side and the left side is the talking side.

The managers know what the plan is from the vice presidents, and they make sure it gets carried out. In order to do this, they communicate frequently with one another and with the vice presidents, sending messages back and forth.

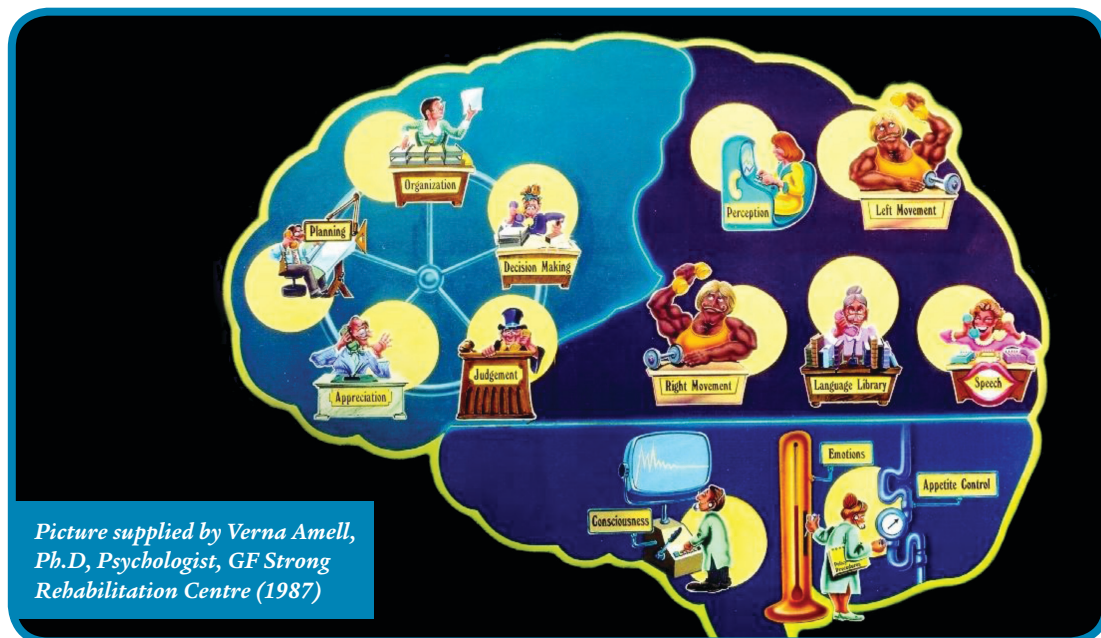
### *Workers*

At the bottom, (limbic region, amygdala, basal ganglia) are the workers. They don't know what the plan is from the vice presidents, but they know their job and they do the same job day in and day out - things like appetite control, need for water, staying alert and awake or going to sleep, and basic emotions (turn on the tears, make the face red, increase the pulse rate).

## Getting Fired

In a brain injury, someone 'gets fired'. It can be a vice president, a manager or a worker, depending on the injury. You can also have someone go on a leave of absence. That occurs when there is a temporary swelling or loss of blood supply, that recovers in a short time. The result of the injury is to reduce the efficiency of the company. Messages get sent but aren't picked up. The vice presidents get annoyed; the managers get fatigued; and the emotional workers get overwrought. Confusion reigns. A primary purpose of rehabilitation is to find out who got fired and who is still on the job, so messages can be re-routed and the company can become more and more efficient again.

-Verna Amell, Ph.D, Psychologist, GF Strong Rehabilitation Centre (1987)



## PREVENTING ANOTHER STROKE

People who have had a stroke have a greater chance of having another one, especially during the first year following the first stroke.

There are several things you have some control over that can help you avoid another stroke, including:

- » Reducing cholesterol
- » Losing weight
- » Getting regular exercise that increases your breathing and your heartbeat
- » Limiting your intake of caffeine, animal fats, sugars, and processed foods
- » Eating plenty of fruits, vegetables, and high-fibre foods
- » Quitting the use of tobacco products
- » Limiting your alcohol consumption
- » Reducing your stress level
- » Avoiding use of certain illegal drugs, such as cocaine

# EFFECTS OF A STROKE

Effects of a stroke can include the following. Remember that every stroke and every person is different.

## PHYSICAL EFFECTS

- » Part or all of one side of the body is paralyzed
- » Loss of feeling or numbness in part or all of one side of the body
- » Loss of awareness of part or all of one side of the body
- » Problems with movement, which can affect walking, sitting, bathing, using the toilet, dressing etc.
- » Pain
- » Fatigue
- » Loss of vision

## COGNITIVE EFFECTS

These effects involve things like thinking, understanding and learning:

- » Loss of ability to recognize familiar objects or understand their use
- » Difficulty judging distances, shapes and directions
- » Difficulty remembering things
- » Difficulty learning new information
- » Slow, cautious behavior
- » Problems planning, organizing and starting tasks
- » Problems recognizing current abilities and limitations
- » Problems with body image

## COMMUNICATION EFFECTS

- » Inability to use or understand words (aphasia)
- » Loss of writing abilities
- » Slurred speech
- » Difficulty in absorbing information

## EMOTIONAL EFFECTS

- » Loss of emotional control (e.g. crying easily – sometimes for no apparent reason)
- » Depression
- » Anxiety
- » Anger
- » Frustration
- » Loss of self esteem

## PERSONAL AND SOCIAL EFFECTS

- » Awkwardness
- » Inappropriate behavior
- » Isolation
- » Family breakdowns
- » Loss of privacy
- » Change in roles
- » Challenges with relationships
- » Work and career issues
- » Financial concerns

# HOW TO JOIN A STROKE RECOVERY BRANCH

## STROKE RECOVERY BRANCHES

SRABC has around 30 local Stroke Recovery Branches across the province. Branches provide a friendly place where stroke survivors, families, friends, and caregivers can get encouragement, help, and support. We offer a range of programs designed to support stroke survivors in the community after they leave hospital. Branches range in size from approximately 10 to 65 members. The programs on offer vary depending on the resources available.

## HOW TO JOIN A STROKE RECOVERY BRANCH

Contact the Provincial Office directly:

301-1212 West Broadway, Vancouver, BC V6H 3V1

**T.** 604.688.3603    **TF.** 1.888.313.3377  
**F.** 604.688.3660    **E.** office@strokerecoverybc.ca

[strokerecoverybc.ca](http://strokerecoverybc.ca)

There is a list of our Branches on pages 12-13 of this booklet We offer these activities at our stroke recovery branches:

1. Physical Exercises
2. Communication and Memory Exercises
3. Social Interaction and Recreation
4. Support from Fellow Stroke Survivors
5. Caregiver Support
6. Stroke Education
7. Help Finding other Health and Community Resources



## OTHER INFORMATION & RESOURCES

### GF STRONG REHABILITATION CENTRE

Offers regular community education sessions throughout BC called Understanding Stroke and Building Community Connections. If you can't attend one they can send you the information by email, fax or through the mail.

T. [604-737-6269](tel:604-737-6269)

### RESOURCES FROM HEART & STROKE FOUNDATION

Heart and Stroke Foundation is developing programming that will enhance support to survivors and family members/care partners. Initiatives include:

#### *1.800.473.4636 Information Line*

Trained volunteers are available on weekdays to answer your questions about heart disease and stroke, recovery, community resources and your ability to reduce the risk of a second event through increasing physical exercise, eat a balanced diet, don't smoke, lower alcohol intake and reduce stress.

#### *Stroke Recovery Directory*

This comprehensive directory provides understanding and details as to the components related to stroke recovery, videos and tips for recovery. There is also an online national resource directory.

[WWW.HEARTANDSTROKE.CA/STROKERECOVERY](http://WWW.HEARTANDSTROKE.CA/STROKERECOVERY)

#### *Hearts in Motion Walking Clubs*

Looking for a great way to begin or stay active? We have over 20 walking clubs in BC from parks to malls depending on the time of year. Contact the 1.800 Information Line for details.

#### *Living with Stroke Program (Fall 2014)*

This 6-8 week program will be provided by trained volunteer facilitators in your community. The program will help survivors and family members cope with the changes as a result of stroke and problem solve to meet their own individual needs. It will provide a social and supportive program to empower and allow for learning from and with others in stroke recovery.

To find a program near you and register call 1.800 Information Line

#### *Improving Lives Newsletter*

This free newsletter provides information on latest research, articles on how to prevent a second event and choosing to alter health behaviours to best accomplish this, personal stories and current events. This is available on line and in print. Call the 1.800 Information Line to register for either mode of distribution.

### ***StrokeLine Newsletter***

The newsletter is produced three times a year and is for stroke survivors and family members. The newsletter provides useful information on recovering from a stroke and adopting a healthy lifestyle.

### ***You've had a TIA (mini-stroke)***

You've had a Transient Ischemic Attack (TIA) is for patients and their families and caregivers. This booklet provides information about TIA's and their link to strokes and why TIA's are a medical emergency.

### ***Let's Talk About Stroke Booklet***

Every stroke is different, but this booklet tries to answer the questions most stroke survivors ask. It provides information that will help you, your caregiver, and your family to understand stroke and the recovery process. Includes "My Stroke Diary" where you can keep your personal record of your stroke and recovery, set goals, and track your progress.

*Available in: English, Chinese, and Punjabi.*

### ***Coping with Stress***

A joint publication of the Heart and Stroke Foundation and the Canadian Mental Health Association. The booklet describes the definition of stress, stress index, understanding stress, coping with stress, effects on health, preventing stress, and tips for dealing with stress and tension.

## **CANADIAN STROKE NETWORK**

Getting on With the Rest of Your Life After Stroke: An interactive work book with information about setting goals, doing exercise, blood pressure measurement, medication diary, relaxation techniques, brain exercises, ideas for crafts.

**T. 613-562-5800 EXT. 8593 | E. [INFO@CANADIANSTROKENETWORK.CA](mailto:INFO@CANADIANSTROKENETWORK.CA)**

## WEBSITE RESOURCES

The best way to find information on the internet is to use an on line search engine like Google. Here are just a few links to get you started.

### Brain Streams

This website aims to improve education on the brain and brain injuries, to help reduce isolation and to promote opportunities for collaboration.

[brainstreams.ca](http://brainstreams.ca)

### The Canadian Stroke Network

This website aims to reduce the physical and societal consequences of stroke.

[canadianstrokenetwork.ca](http://canadianstrokenetwork.ca)

### Heart and Stroke Foundation

[heartandstroke.ca](http://heartandstroke.ca)

### Stroke Association

The website of the American Stroke Association.

[strokeassociation.org](http://strokeassociation.org)

### World Stroke Campaign

World Stroke Campaign website lists stroke organizations around the world.

[worldstrokecampaign.org](http://worldstrokecampaign.org)

### Family Caregiver Network Society

Family Caregiver Network Society: Help and information for caregivers in BC.

[fcns-caregiving.org/](http://fcns-caregiving.org/)

### Rescue for Caregivers

Rescue Website for Caregivers: an online lifeline to help caregivers keep their head above water.

[rorc.research.va.gov/rescue/](http://rorc.research.va.gov/rescue/)

## SOCIAL MEDIA LINKS

We post useful information on stroke recovery here. Please take a look at the links, 'like' us, 'follow' us and let us know your ideas.

**Facebook:** [facebook.com/StrokeRecoveryBC](https://facebook.com/StrokeRecoveryBC)

**Twitter:** @StrokeRecovBC

## PRINTED RESOURCES

### SRABC GUIDES TO RECOVERING FROM A STROKE:

They are available in English, Chinese, Punjabi and Hindi please email [office@strokerecoverybc.ca](mailto:office@strokerecoverybc.ca) or visit our website for copies. The titles are:

#### Daily Living

This guide will help to answer questions about how to successfully return home and resume daily living after stroke.

#### Adjusting the Home after Stroke

This guide will help to answer two questions:

*What can be done to make the home safe?*

*How can the home be set up to help recovery?*

#### Self-Advocacy

This guide will help to answer questions about how to get what you need after a stroke, whether you are a caregiver or a stroke survivor.

#### Getting Back into the Community

This guide will help to answer questions about how to get back into the community after a stroke.

#### Understanding Aphasia

This guide will help to answer questions about speech and language problems after a stroke.

### TAKE CARE: A HANDBOOK FOR FAMILY CAREGIVERS

This handbook talks about the problems and rewards that come from caring for an adult with a chronic illness or disability. The aim is to give caregivers information and ideas about how to cope. It is available in English and Traditional and Simplified Chinese. There are copies on the SRABC website at:

<http://tinyurl.com/px8gvrd>

## HOW TO DONATE

Having a stroke is devastating. One minute you are a fully functioning person, the next, you can't think, can't speak, can't feel and can hardly move. There are 6,500 strokes in BC every year.

Hospitals do a great job of saving people who survive a stroke but sooner or later those survivors go back home. What then?

When you decide to donate to Stroke Recovery Association of BC, you help build a world where every stroke survivor has respect, inclusion, and support in their home community. Please help to bring stroke survivors in BC back to life by making a donation today.

#### *There are 2 ways to DONATE*

1. By Cheque: Cheques payable to Stroke Recovery Association of BC can be mailed to us at: 301-1212 West Broadway Vancouver, BC V6H 3V1
2. Online via PayPal at [strokerecoverybc.ca](http://strokerecoverybc.ca) If you have any questions about donating to SRABC, please contact us.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **ARE STROKE RECOVERY ASSOCIATION OF BC AND THE HEART AND STROKE FOUNDATION THE SAME THING?**

NO, we work closely together but are two different organizations. Heart and Stroke Foundation is a valued partner of SRABC. The Heart and Stroke Foundation contributes significant funding to SRABC. Our provincial office is in the Heart and Stroke Foundation building in Vancouver. We do different things:

The Stroke Recovery Association of BC works with stroke survivors and their families and caregivers in local communities to improve the survivors' overall quality of life as they recover from a stroke.

The Heart and Stroke Foundation aims to eliminate heart disease and stroke and reduce their impact through:

- » The Advancement of Research and its Application
- » The Promotion of Healthy Living
- » Advocacy

### **WHAT DOES IT COST TO JOIN STROKE RECOVERY ASSOCIATION OF BC?**

There is a small annual membership fee that goes towards the running of SRABC. The branch might also charge a fee to help them to run their stroke recovery program.

### **WHAT IF THERE IS NO STROKE RECOVERY ASSOCIATION BRANCH IN MY COMMUNITY?**

There may still be programs and services available. Talk to your doctor, rehabilitation therapist or social worker for information.

# STROKE RECOVERY BRANCHES

Please see our website for the most up to date contact information

» [strokerecoverybc.ca/what-we-do/stroke-recovery-branch-list/](http://strokerecoverybc.ca/what-we-do/stroke-recovery-branch-list/)

» Contact the Provincial Office at 604-688-3603 or by Email at [office@strokerecoverybc.ca](mailto:office@strokerecoverybc.ca)

## VANCOUVER COASTAL REGION

### NORTH VANCOUVER

#### St. Stephen's Anglican Church

885 22nd Street, West Vancouver

*Mon.* 10:00am – 2:00pm

#### North Shore Neighborhood House

225 E. 2nd Street, North Vancouver

*Tue.* 10:00am – 2:00pm

*Wed.* 10:00am – 2:00pm

*Thu.* 10:00am – 2:00pm

### SECHLT/SUNSHINE COAST

#### Green Court Hall

4469 Rondevue Road, Sechelt

*Fri.* 9:30am – 12:00pm

### RICHMOND

#### South Arm Community Centre

8880 Williams Road, Richmond

*Fri.* 11:00am – 1:00pm

### VANCOUVER DOUGLAS PARK

#### Douglas Park Community Centre

801 W. 22nd Avenue, Vancouver

*Fri.* 11:00pm – 2:30pm

### VANCOUVER SHAUGHNESSY

#### Shaughnessy Heights United Church

1550 W. 33rd Avenue, Vancouver

*Tue.* 10:30am – 2:00pm

### VANCOUVER STRATHCONA

#### Strathcona Community Centre

601 Keefer Street, Vancouver

*Thu.* 10:00am – 1:00pm

### VANCOUVER TEMPLETON

#### Templeton Pool Activity Room

700 Templeton Drive, Vancouver

*Thu.* 10:00am – 1:30pm

### POWELL RIVER

#### Lower Legion Hall

6811 Alexander Street, Powell River

*Tuesdays:* 9:00am – 1:00pm

## FRASER REGION

### ABBOTSFORD

#### Abbotsford Recreation Center

2499 McMillian Road, Abbotsford

*Thu.* 12:30pm – 3:30pm

### BURNABY NORTH

#### Confederation House

4585 Albert Street, Burnaby

*Wed.* 10:00am – 1:15pm

### BURNABY SOUTH

#### Edmonds Community Centre

7433 Edmonds Street, Burnaby

*Fri.* 10:00am – 1:00pm

### COQUITLAM

#### Dogwood Pavilion

624 Poirier Street, Coquitlam

*Fri.* 10:30am – 2:00pm

### MAPLE RIDGE/PITT MEADOW

#### Ridge Meadows Seniors Activity Centre

12150 224th Street, Maple Ridge

*Fri.* 10:15am – 1:15pm

### PORT COQUITLAM

#### Wilson Centre

2150 Wilson Avenue, Port Coquitlam

*Mon.* 11:30am – 2:00pm

### SURREY

#### St. Luke's Auditorium

10167 148th Street, Surrey

*Thu.* 9:00am – 12:00pm

### DELTA

#### Tsawwassen United Church

693 53rd Street, Delta

*Tue.* 10:00am – 2:00pm

### WHITE ROCK/SOUTH SURREY

#### Centre for Active Living

1475 Anderson Street, White Rock

*Mon.* 9:00am – 12:00pm

*Tue.* 9:00am – 12:00pm

*Thu.* 9:00am – 12:00pm

## INTERIOR REGION

### KAMLOOPS

**Calvary Community Church**  
1205 Rogers Way, Kamloops

*Thu. (2nd – 4th) 10:30am – 1:30pm*

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### KELOWNA

**St. Aidan's Anglican Church**  
380 Leathead Road, Kelowna

*Thu. 11:30am – 2:30pm*

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### SALMON ARM

**St. Joseph's Church**  
90 1st Street S.E., Salmon Arm

*Fri. (2nd – 4th) 10:30am – 1:30pm*

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### TRAIL

**Presbyterian Church lower floor**  
1139 Pine Avenue, Trail

*Thu. 10:00am – 1:00pm*

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### VERNON

**Fraternal Order of Eagles Hall**  
5101 25th Avenue, Vernon

*Thu. 9:30am – 12:30pm*

## VANCOUVER ISLAND REGION

### COMOX VALLEY

**Comox United Church**  
250 Beach Avenue, Comox

*Wed. (1st & 3rd) 10:00am – 12:00pm*

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### NANAIMO

**Bowen Park Complex**  
500 Bowen Road, Nanaimo

*Fri. 10:45am – 2:00pm*

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### OCEANSIDE

**St. Columba Presbyterian Hall**  
921 Wembley Road, Parksville

*Fri. 11:00am – 1:30pm*

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### SAANICH PENINSULA

**Seventh Day Adventist Church**  
9300 Willingdon Road, North Saanich

*Mon. 11:00am – 2:00pm*

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### VICTORIA

**Knox Presbyterian Church**  
2964 Richmond Road, Victoria

*Fri. 10:30am – 1:30pm*

## NORTHERN REGION

### PRINCE GEORGE

**Elder Citizens' Recreation Association**

1692 10th Avenue, Prince George

*Wed. 9:30am – 12:30pm*

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### VANDERHOOF

**Stuart Nechako Manor**  
3297 Hospital Road, Vanderhoof

*Mon. 9:30am – 12:00pm*



STROKE RECOVERY ASSOCIATION  
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

The Stroke Recovery Association of BC gratefully acknowledges the support of our partners:

**Heart and Stroke Foundation of BC & Yukon  
Province of British Columbia  
Provincial Health Services Authority**