

Unique Issues for Young Stroke Survivors



June is Stroke Month

Stroke can happen at any age... but what does that mean for someone who is going to school, working full-time, raising a family, and may be a caregiver for elderly parents? So many questions come to mind. Why did it happen to me? How do I make sure it doesn't happen again? Will I ever get my life back? How can I look after my family?

Stroke rates are on the rise in young adults regardless of what is used as the cutoff age for "young"

- 19% of hospital admissions for stroke & TIA were for patients between 20-59 years of age (HSF 2017)
- 20% of all strokes occur under the age of 60 years

In many instances, the young stroke survivor may have a greater neurological recovery with less functional deficits. While they may look well compared to someone with visible weakness or speech impairments post-stroke, they can still experience many challenges which are considered **invisible deficits**.

So what are these invisible deficits?

- 80% have psychosocial complaints such as depression, anxiety
- 80% experience fatigue
- 50-70% have sleep disturbances
- 30-40% have cognitive dysfunction

Pikula 2021



[Click Here to watch Hailey Bieber tell her story](#)

Risk Factors for Young Stroke

- Contraceptives containing estrogen
- Pregnancy
- Migraine with aura (more common in women)
- Heavy or binge drinking
- Carotid dissection due to trauma
- Congenital heart disease/Genetic conditions
- Recreational drug use
- Cause unknown
- Risk factors such as high blood pressure, diabetes, unhealthy diet, and lack of physical activity are on the rise

Dr Pikula, Director of the UHN Stroke in Young Adults (SiYA) Program, indicates that stroke in younger adults has become a major socioeconomic issue

- <50% return to work and of those that do - 25% require modifications
- stroke survivors have a longer time to live and may not be able to work enough to support themselves

Did you know? It is estimated that stroke costs the Canadian economy more than \$3.6 billion yearly, especially among those who had been working.

What about Quality of Life?

The quality of life perception in the younger stroke survivor is much different than the older stroke survivor due to changes in their:

- job & leisure activities
- sexual life
- physical & mental health



[Listen to Dr. Pikula discuss the latest research in young stroke](#)

References: Evidence-based review of Stroke Rehabilitation (EBRSR). (2018). Rehabilitation of younger patients post stroke. Pikula, A. (2021) Stroke in Young Adults: Patient Reported Outcomes & Psychosocial Needs. Provincial Stroke Rounds. Sherman, H. (Host). (2022, April 5). The rise of stroke in young adults (S1 E2) [Audio podcast episode]. Your Complex Brain.

