

The Impact of Exercise on Stroke Prevention and Recovery

A stroke occurs when parts of the brain don't get enough blood, either because of a blood clot that blocks a blood vessel, or a blood vessel that bursts or leaks into the brain.

Strokes can range from mild to very serious and recovering from a stroke can take a long time and be very hard work.

“So somebody could be able to get in and out of bed fine and sit on the edge of the bed and maybe even stand, but their lower extremity strength might not allow them to ambulate. Some other patient may have equal strength in their lower extremities, but they're not able to balance because of where the stroke was in the brain.”

But even for patients who have serious strokes, exercise is an important part of recovery, and it can help reduce your risk of a future stroke.

One of the main benefits of exercise after a stroke is helping lower your risk of experiencing another stroke.

Exercise can help lower your blood pressure, which is a major risk factor for stroke.

Getting enough exercise can also help lower cholesterol, make it easier to lose weight, control your blood sugar, and make you feel motivated to take good care of yourself.

All of these reduce your stroke risk.

Exercise has other benefits as well for stroke patients.

It makes you stronger, including parts of your body that were affected by the stroke like your arms and legs.

Improves your balance, which makes it less likely you'll fall and get injured.

Improves your flexibility, which goes hand in hand with better balance to make your day-to-day life easier and less dangerous.

Together with your stroke recovery team, decide on the type of exercise that is best for you based on what you enjoy and your level of injury.

From walking to swimming to lifting weights or using exercise bands.

Even seated exercises can be helpful.

However, you and your stroke recovery team plan for you to start exercising again, the American Stroke Association has some tips that can help:

First, make sure you're consulting with your stroke recovery team or health care provider.

Next, be sure that you're exercising regularly. Exercise works best if you stick to a regular schedule.

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Start by following the prescribed regimen from your stroke recovery team to build up your strength and stamina.

Aim for 150 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity a week, preferably spread throughout the week.

Talk with your stroke recovery team for recommendations on what kind and how much physical activity you should attempt. Try to stay as active as you can. The longer you stay in bed, the harder your recovery may be.

“In order to regain abilities, you have to do your exercises. You have to stick with the program.”

Exercise is good for you. Ask your stroke recovery team about starting to exercise as a key part of your recovery from stroke and to help you improve your life as well as lessen your risk of another stroke.