

Leg Exercises for Stroke Patients

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Leg exercises for stroke patients are a *big deal*. Mostly because they involve some of the biggest muscles in your body.

Today we'll be focusing on 3 different types of leg exercises: stretching, mobility, and weight-bearing.

To determine the amount of repetitions and sets for your exercises, we encourage you to consult with your doctor or physician.

A Foreword

Leg exercises aren't just about moving your legs and hoping that you'll regain mobility. In order for these rehabilitation exercises to work, there needs to be repetition and feedback.

Repetition just might be the single most important thing that will boost your motor recovery.

By feedback, we mean that there needs to be a clear signal that lets your brain know if you did the exercise right or wrong see article dated 4/24/17 "How to Use Feedback to Recover from Stroke Faster". So for all of these leg exercises, be sure to set measurable goals so that your brain can recognize what's right and what's wrong.

This helps your brain **rewire** and heal itself. Alright, now on to the good stuff.

1. Stretching Exercises

If you remember one thing, remember this: always stretch! Stretching helps prevent injury, increase range of motion, and increase blood flow to the muscles. When we stay sedentary for too long, all sorts of health problems erupt, as discussed in this great little informational [video](#). Some leg stretches to try are:

Wall Stretches

Stand facing the wall and put your arms out straight, chest height, and place them on the wall. Make sure the rest of you is standing as tall as you can. Then, bend your elbows and allow yourself to lean forward, keeping your feet flat, until you feel the stretch in the back of your legs. Think of it as a standing push-up.

Lying Leg Crossover

Lie down on your back facing up. Then, use your arm to move your left leg across your body onto the other side of your body. This should feel like one big twist. Enjoy the stretch for as long as you want and then repeat on the other side. This stretch relieves tension in your lower back.

2. Mobility Exercises

The purpose of mobility leg exercises is to improve movement in your knees, hips, and pelvis. These exercises focus less on building strength and more on developing simple movement in your joints. Here are some examples:

Lying Knee Twist

Lie down on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor or mattress. Keep your legs together and lower them to one side and then the other. This exercise helps reduce stiffness in the joints and works best if you keep your legs together the entire time.

Knee Hugs

Lying on your back, bring your left knee into your chest and give it a gentle hug. Repeat with the other leg and alternate back and forth. This exercise is great for loosening up your hips and giving your knees some love.

3. Weight-Bearing Exercises

The term ‘weight-bearing’ usually brings images of dumbbells and bench presses to mind, but pumping iron is optional for this one.

Walking

Walking is a simple weight-bearing exercise to practice after stroke that works wonders for your body. If you can’t walk on your own yet – and we say ‘yet’ because you’ll definitely get there with practice –

try walking using an assistive device recommended by your occupational therapist. Going for a simple walk around your neighborhood can help clear your mind and alleviate post-stroke depression.

Leg Presses

The leg press exercise is a great alternative to walking. To use a leg press machine, sit down on the machine and place your feet on the foot platform making sure they're parallel to each other. With your knees bent into your chest, push on the platform until your legs are straight and perform as many repetitions and sets as your clinician recommends.

Weight-bearing exercises like these can help you regain strength in your legs so that if you can't walk independently yet, you'll be on your way soon.