

Stroke Recovery Process: What to Expect on the Road to Recovery

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Understanding your unique stroke recovery process can be tricky because no two strokes are the same, and therefore everyone's stroke recovery process will differ from one another. Although it's tough to predict your unique stroke recovery process, it's still a great idea to understand what generally happens on the road to recovery.

In today's article, you'll learn the how, what, where, and why of stroke recovery. There's a lot to learn, so make yourself nice and comfy and let's dig in.

The Main Objective of Recovery

To understand the main purpose of stroke recovery, we must first discuss what a stroke is. A stroke happens when the brain's supply of blood is cut off either by a clogged or burst artery. The lack of blood deprives the brain of oxygen and causes damage, and that damage creates stroke side effects.

The purpose of stroke recovery is to repair this damage, which is possible by activating **neuroplasticity**. Neuroplasticity is the mechanism that your brain uses to rewire and heal itself by forming new neural connections. This rewiring process is what will restore your abilities after stroke.

The Best Way to Recover from Stroke

Neuroplasticity is extremely important for healing after stroke, and the best way to activate neuroplasticity is with **repetition and practice**. Each time you repeat something, you start to create and strengthen new neural connections in your brain. The more you practice, the stronger those connections become.

For example, if your leg mobility is impaired after stroke, then practicing leg exercises over and over and over is the best way to regain control of your leg. Because each time you practice those leg exercises, you strengthen the part of your brain that controls leg movement. The stronger those connections become, the better you get at moving your leg. So, focus on repetition and practice to activate neuroplasticity and you'll be well on your way to recovery.

Where Your Recovery Will Take You

Now that you understand *how* recovery works, let's discuss *where* recovery will take place. Throughout the stroke recovery process, you will receive various types of care. After leaving the hospital, you will go to one of these 3 places for care:

1. Skilled Nursing Facility

A skilled nursing facility is a place where patients can live if they require continuous care. This is a good fit for you if you have difficulty with the **Activities of Daily Living**.

2. Inpatient Rehabilitation Center

Inpatient rehabilitation care (or acute care) is a good fit for patients who need intensive rehabilitation and are able to participate in a minimum of 3 hours of therapy per day.

3. Back Home

Patients who are discharged directly back home may receive rehabilitation services conveniently in their home, or they can choose to pursue recovery independently.

To get a better sense of where your stroke recovery process will take you, it's best to talk to your doctor, therapist, or neurologist.

Your Unique Rate of Recovery

Whenever people ask about the stroke recovery process, they always want to know how long it will take – understandably so. Yet, when you ask your medical team about the rate of your recovery, you might get mixed answers – or no answers at all. That's because every stroke is different, which means that every stroke recovery will take different amounts of time.

Recovery goes forward and backward, but trust that when you zoom out and look at the big picture, you're making more progress than it seems! The general rule of thumb is that it takes less time to recover from a mild stroke than it does to recover from a severe stroke. However, anything is possible. We know stroke survivors who were supposed to remain in a wheelchair forever, and yet they were walking within 6 months of recovery! This proves that there are always exceptions.

You can often boost your rate of recovery by focusing on repetition and persistence and having a warrior's mindset.

How Long Will Recovery Take?

Now that you understand the ebb and flow of recovery, here's a *general* outline of what your stroke recovery timeline might look like:

Immediately after stroke, rehabilitation begins as soon as possible. Through rehab, you will begin to improve at a rapid rate. This is caused by the brain's 'heightened state of plasticity' as it tries to heal itself after the injury.

Three months after stroke, the most rapid healing has happened and your results might begin to plateau. Don't worry – this is simply a slowdown in results, not a stopping. Recovery only stops when you stop.

One year post stroke, things start to greatly vary from person to person. At this point, you may have achieved a full recovery, or you may still be pursuing recovery. It greatly depends on your unique stroke side effects.

Decades after stroke, recover is still absolutely possible! It's extremely important to know that if you've stopped rehabbing and it's been decades since your stroke, you can still pick things back up and start to improve. We hear a lot of stroke survivors ask, "Can I still recover even if it's been 14 years since my stroke? What about 23 years?" **The answer to these questions is always YES.**

Neuroplasticity can be activated at any age and any stage of recovery.

Your Stroke Recovery Process Will Be Unique

Overall, your stroke recovery process will be very unique to your situation and work ethic. Throughout the process, your main priority is regaining lost abilities and independence by rewiring your brain through repetitive practice.

The amount of time that your recovery takes will depend upon your unique stroke side effects and how much persistence you have. (And, of course, how much repetition you get in during your rehabilitation.)

Take everything one step at a time and trust that even the impossible is possible.

We hope this article helped you understand the stroke recovery process.