

# Passive Arm Exercises for Stroke Recovery

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*Stretching and passive range of motion arm exercises for stroke recovery*

## Why Early Muscle Activation Is Important

During stroke recovery, it's important to start doing exercises immediately because early muscle activation is critical to a successful recovery.

The sooner you get your muscles moving, the sooner your brain can start **rewiring itself**.

And it'll also help you avoid **learned nonuse**. See article 8/17/15.

## Stretching Exercises

Most fitness gurus rave about the importance of stretching – for everyone! Stretching is incredibly important for athletes and stroke survivors alike because it helps prevent muscle shortening and joint stiffness.

Try moving your arm through its full *range of motion* at least 3 times a day. If you can't do this on your own yet, a caregiver can provide assistance. You can also try gently stretching any tight muscles. Stretch them to the point of slight discomfort (but never pain) and hold for 1 minute.

## Passive Range of Motion Arm Exercises

Passive range of motion exercises are simple movements that you can do without weights. (Learn the difference between [passive and active exercises here](#).)

These exercises are a great place to start as you work your way up towards functional and strength training (which we will cover in next weeks post).

### *Shoulder Flexion*

Lie down on your back and clasp your hands together, interlacing your fingers if you can. With your fist over your chest, raise your arms up towards the ceiling using your strong arm to help lift the affected arm. Once fully extended, or as extended as you can, lower your arms and repeat again.

### *Straight Arm Punches*

With your hands clasped in the air and arms extended, lift your shoulder blades off the floor without lifting your head. This should feel like you're slightly lifting your chest and trying to push a button on the ceiling with your knuckles. Once you feel your shoulder blades lift, hold for a few seconds and then lower and repeat.

### *Elbow Flexion/Extension*

With your hands clasped in the air straight above your chest (the same starting position as the previous exercise), bend your elbows back and lower your clasped hands down to your forehead, keeping your elbows body-width apart and your upper arms unmoved and perpendicular to the floor. Then, raise your fist back above your shoulders and repeat.