

Active vs Passive Exercises during Rehab

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Knowing the difference between active vs passive exercises can help you understand what your rehabilitation process will encompass. In this article, you'll learn what active and passive exercises are, who should use them, and how they can benefit your rehabilitation program.

What Are Passive Exercises?

Passive exercises are also known as passive range of motion (ROM) exercises; and your range of motion includes how far you can move your joints in different directions. These exercises are considered passive because you don't exert any effort. Instead, someone helps you move your muscles and joints through their full range of motion for you.

Who Can Benefit from Passive Exercises?

Passive ROM exercises are great for stroke survivors who are left with mild to severe paralyzation, or paresis. These exercises can help prevent muscle stiffness and [spasticity](#) – a common post-stroke side effect that results in limited coordination and muscle movement. Along with prevention, passive ROM exercises can also be used to treat spasticity.

Stroke survivors who don't suffer from paresis can still benefit from range of motion exercises, but it's better to do them yourself through active ROM exercises.

What Are Active Exercises?

Active exercises involve your physical effort exerted into muscular activity. Active exercises can include active range of motion, like self-stretching, or general exercises where you get your muscles moving, like [leg exercises](#). As long as you're doing the movements yourself, it's active exercise.

During stroke recovery, active rehab exercises help strengthen the [neural pathways](#) in your brain that enable you to perform the movement. So the more you practice, the better you'll get.

Who Can Benefit from Active Exercises?

Stroke survivors who are looking to [recover impaired movement after stroke](#) can benefit from active exercise. In fact, [rehab exercises](#) are the only way to regain lost movement after stroke because you need to retrain your brain how to communicate with your muscles.

Now that you know the difference between active and passive exercises, **do you feel like your rehab regimen is properly geared to fit your capabilities?** If yes, then great! If not, then talk with your therapist to see how you can adjust your rehab exercise program.