

# 7 Ways to Quickly Improve Hand Function After Stroke

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Improving hand function after stroke is our passion. And we're here to help you do it as fast as possible. Here are 7 steps that you can take to quickly speed up hand recovery after stroke.

The first 3 'top tips' are the most essential, and the last ones are 'booster techniques' that you can use to boost your recovery even more. Let's get started.

## 1. Rehab Exercise

The #1 thing that will improve your hand function after stroke is *rehab exercise*. In your case, you want to focus on hand therapy exercises for your fine motor skills.

The goal of rehab exercise is much different from traditional exercise. While traditional exercise focuses on making your muscles stronger, rehab exercise focuses on making your brain stronger.

Your brain gets stronger by rewiring itself through **neuroplasticity**, which is activated through rehab exercise. The more you practice rehab exercise, the more your brain rewires itself, and the more movement you recover.

## 2. Repetitive Practice

However, in order to make the most of neuroplasticity and quickly improve your hand function, you need to practice your hand therapy exercises *repetitively*. We call this **repetitive practice**.

The more you repeat an exercise, the more you engage neuroplasticity. As you repeat each movement over and over, the new neural connections in your brain get stronger and stronger. This is why practice makes perfect.

**In order to improve hand function as fast as possible, you need to make sure that you're performing a high number of repetitions of your hand exercises. This is of the utmost importance.**

Because if you don't utilize repetition and practice your hand therapy exercises only a few times each, then your brain won't have the stimulation that it needs to rewire itself. The new connections in your brain may form, but they won't stick. Instead, they will fade away. So in order to regain hand function after stroke *for good*, you need to get your improvements to stick with repetitive practice.

## 3. Consistency

Repetitive practice will take your hand improvement very far, and it becomes even more effective with **consistency**. You need to fuel your brain with repetitive practice to rewire your brain, but you need to fuel your brain *consistently*. Otherwise you won't get the full benefit of your practice.

**You don't want too much time passing between each exercise session, otherwise the new connections in your brain will start to weaken.** So create a rehab schedule for yourself and stick with it *consistently*.

## Booster Techniques

Those 3 techniques are the bread and butter of hand improvement. **Stroke recovery = neuroplasticity + repetition + consistency.** That's the formula for success.

But there are a few more ways to take your progress even farther. Next, we're going to dig into some booster techniques that can take your hand improvement from good to great.

## 4. Mental Practice

Mental practice is the art of visualizing yourself doing something. In this case, you would visualize yourself doing hand movements. To boost hand improvement after stroke, you should mentally practice your hand exercises before and/or after your physical exercise.

**Because when you mentally practice something, you engage neuroplasticity in the same way that physical practice does...**

...Can you believe that?! The [scientific evidence](#) behind it makes us very excited because it means that *you can literally boost your motor improvements from the comfort of your bed.*

So each time you perform your hand therapy exercises, be sure to take at least 5 minutes to lie down (or sit down) with your eyes closed and visualize yourself performing the exercises correctly. **This will spark more neuroplasticity in your brain and help you improve hand function faster.**

## 5. Mirror Therapy

Mirror therapy is a magical thing.

It involves placing a tabletop mirror over your affected hand so that it reflects your unaffected hand in place of your affected hand. That's a bit of a tongue twister, so here's a picture:



During mirror therapy, you perform hand exercises with your unaffected hand, and it 'tricks' your brain into thinking that you're moving your affected hand, too (because of the reflection). This sparks neuroplasticity and helps you regain movement in your affected hand.

**Mirror therapy is a great way to improve movement in your hand after stroke – especially if you currently have very minimal movement.**

## 6. TENS Therapy

TENS therapy stands for Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation therapy. It involves electrical stimulation that's applied to your skin to provide extra stimulation to your nerves and muscles.

TENS therapy can help improve movement in your hand because it brings awareness into the subtle muscle contractions in your affected hand, which strengthens the connection between your brain and your hand.

According to [Katie Smith](#), OT, it's best to use TENS therapy *at the same time as rehab exercise*. By electrically stimulating your muscles while using them, you can regain hand movement much better.

## 7. Meaning and Fun

Everything we've discussed so far sounds like a LOT of work, huh? And when rehab feels like a chore, you're less likely to stick with it for the long haul. That's why you need to find forms of therapy that are fun and motivating to you. Because when rehab is fun, you're far more likely to stick with it, and that's where real progress is made.

**Having fun helps you get your reps in and stay consistent, which are the most important factors for speedy hand recovery!**

## 8. MusicGlove Hand Therapy

*Bonus tip! (Because it's personal.)* If you're looking for a tool that quickly improves hand function without being a bore, then **give MusicGlove a look**. (sold at [Flintrehab.com](http://Flintrehab.com)) MusicGlove can help you improve hand function in just two weeks because it incorporates neuroplasticity and repetitive practice (*lots of repetitive practice*) into a fun, musical game. Our patients really enjoy how motivating it is!

## Summary

And that's wraps up our guide to improving hand function after stroke. As long as you have neuroplasticity, repetitive practice, and consistency in place, then you'll be on the fast track to recovery. And if you can add some mental practice, TENS therapy, mirror therapy, or fun into the mix, then you'll really start to see improvement fast.