

How to Estimate Your Stroke Recovery Rate

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Everyone's stroke recovery rate will be different.

Because every stroke is unique, every stroke recovery will take a unique amount of time. Despite these differences, it can still be helpful to have a general idea of how long stroke recovery takes.

Today, you'll learn what the NIH Stroke Scale is and how you can use it to estimate your stroke recovery rate. Then, we'll discuss some great ways to speed up the stroke recovery process.

Let's dig in.

Using the NIH Stroke Scale to Estimate Your Stroke Recovery Rate

The National Institutes of Health Stroke Scale (NIHSS) is used to assess the impact of stroke. It provides a score based on how much bodily/mental function you have. Your NIHSS score will help predict your likelihood of recovery.

Here's the scoring system:

- 0 = no stroke symptoms
- 1-4 = minor stroke
- 5-15 = moderate stroke
- 16-20 = moderate to severe stroke
- 21-42 = severe (or "massive") stroke

You can learn more about the NIH Stroke Scale on our article on 5/8/2017, but for now all you need to understand is that your NIHSS score will determine if your stroke was mild, moderate, or massive. This is important for estimating your rate of recovery.

Rate of Recovery from Mild, Moderate, and Massive Stroke

Based on the severity of your stroke, your rate of recovery might go something like this:

Mild stroke:

From what we have seen, most patients recovering from a mild stroke can recover most function within 3-6 months of rehabilitation.

Moderate stroke:

According to the National Stroke Association, about 40% of stroke survivors sustain a moderate to severe stroke. Some of these patients can recover within a year of rehabilitation (based on what we've seen and heard). Others may require several years to regain independence.

Massive stroke:

Those recovering from massive stroke have much larger obstacles to overcome. Unfortunately, this means that recovery often takes years. In some cases, it can take well over a decade to achieve independence again. *But don't let this stop you from pursuing a full recovery.* Although it will take lots of hard work, recovery is always possible.

Important note:

Your rate of recovery could be shorter or faster than these estimates. You can increase your chances of a faster recovery by working hard and using the concepts we discuss next.

However, there is also a chance that your recovery might take longer if there are extra complications to your health or if there's a lack of motivation/action. Being patient and kind to yourself during this time is essential. Try not to beat yourself up for having a slower recovery than someone else. You are healing at your own rate, and it's perfect.

5 Ways to Recover from Stroke Faster

Now that you understand the general stroke recovery timeline, let's talk about how to speed things up! Although a faster recovery might sound like a hoax (and you should always exercise caution with advice like this), the following tips are backed by science – so you know they work.

Let's start with the most important concept that we believe every single stroke survivor should know:

1. Repetition Is Stroke Recovery Rocket Fuel

As you're recovering from stroke, your brain is rewiring itself through the process of neuroplasticity. The more neuroplasticity you activate, the faster you will heal.

Repetition is the best way to activate neuroplasticity. The more you repeat something, the stronger the new connections in your brain become. For example, repeating an arm exercise 100 times per workout will help you heal faster than 8 repetitions. (Quality of movement matters here, too.)

2. Consistent Practice = Faster Improvement

As you begin to increase the repetition in your stroke recovery regimen, it's important to also focus on **consistency**. You need consistency to strengthen the new connections in your brain so that they don't weaken. If you let a week go by without exercising, for example, then you won't improve much. The new connections in your brain will weaken without consistent stimulation. So be consistent with your regimen and you will find that you see faster results.

3. Mental Practice Activates Neuroplasticity Too

Now that you have consistency and repetition in gear, it's time to look beyond physical practice for results.

Studies have shown that **mental practice** (i.e. visualizing yourself doing something) helps activate neuroplasticity the same way that physical practice does. That means that you can boost recovery even more by visualizing yourself doing your exercises, too.

This step is too easy to skip. You can help your brain recover while lying in bed and just imagining yourself moving! **Start your mental practice** as soon as you can.

4. Get Enough Sleep

If your body craves sleep, it's important to listen and let yourself sleep!

During stroke recovery, the brain is healing, which sucks up a lot of your energy. In order to promote more healing in your brain and restore your energy levels, you need sleep. A lot of it. If you go without sleep, it can seriously drain your energy and slow down your recovery. Try your best not to let this happen.

5. Eat Quality Food for Fuel

Eating a healthy diet is important for **stroke prevention** as well as keeping your energy levels up. Stroke rehabilitation is tiring work. Along with frequent naps, you should also be refueling with **healthy, whole foods**. Minimally processed food will provide you with the energy you need to succeed!

Understanding Your Stroke Recovery Rate

And there you have it. Your stroke recovery rate will depend on the severity of your stroke and your unique situation.

Luckily, you can speed up your stroke recovery process by focusing on repetition, consistency, mental practice, sleep, and good nutrition.