

15 Things You Must Know About Stroke Recovery

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Stroke recovery involves many different variables, and in the beginning, it can honestly feel overwhelming.

A great way to reduce overwhelm and anxiety is to educate yourself about everything you can related to stroke recovery.

To help with your stroke education, we put together this list of 15 things that we feel every patient must know during stroke recovery.

Some of them are action items. Some of them are just important facts. And all of them will help you achieve a higher recovery.

Let's dig in.

1. Know That Stroke Recovery Is Always Possible – Even Decades After Stroke

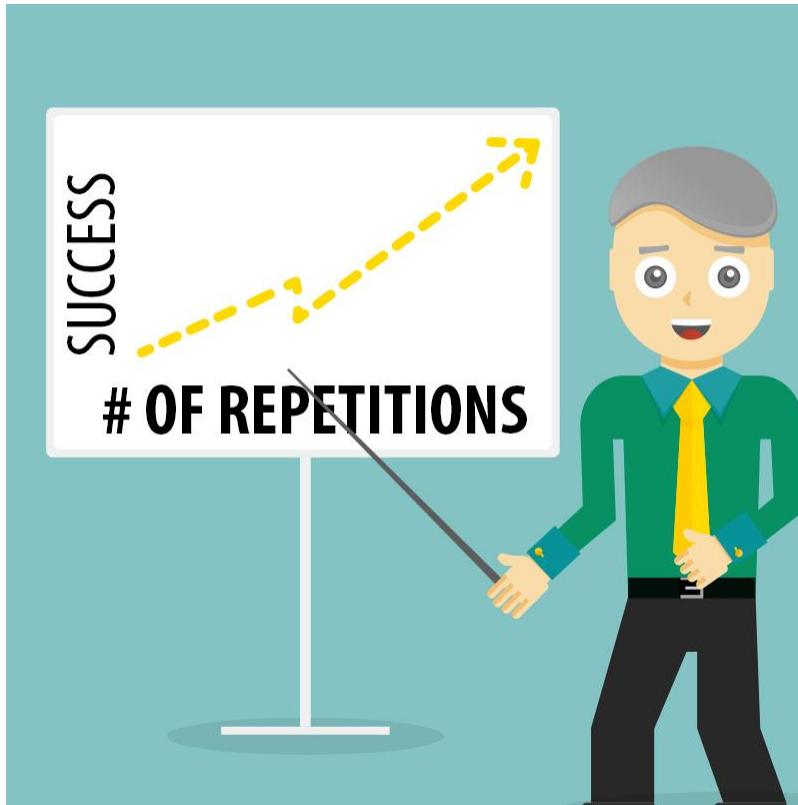
What you should know: *The brain is always capable of healing at any age and any stage of recovery, so never give up.*

Someone recently asked us, “It’s been 13 years since my stroke, is there any hope for improvement? Or will it just be wasted effort?” And our answer was, *there’s always hope*. Stroke recovery is always possible – even decades after stroke.

We once saw a stroke patient 24-years post stroke decide that, after a decade without rehab, he wanted to improve hand function. Although his family thought it would be a waste of effort, he tried anyway. And guess what? *He succeeded.*

2. Make Repetition Your Best Friend

What you should know: *Repetition is how you will rebuild all the skills that you lost after stroke.*



Repetition is the #1 driver of success during stroke recovery because repetition helps activate neuroplasticity, the mechanism that your brain uses to rewire itself and form new connections. The more you practice something, the stronger the connections in your brain become.

For example, if you want to improve movement in your arm after stroke, then you need to practice arm exercises repetitively, because each time you move your arm, it strengthens new connections in your brain.

3. Improve Almost All of Your Stroke Side Effects with Repetitive Practice

What you should know: *No matter what stroke side effect you're trying to improve, repetitive practice will help.*

Repetition doesn't just apply to exercise, though. You can apply the same concept to heal almost all other stroke side effects like impaired attention, memory, or emotions. For example, if you practice playing memory games, then your memory will improve. Similarly, if you have emotional lability (uncontrollable emotions), then you'll get better at controlling your emotions by practicing feeling your emotions on purpose.

4. Speed Up Stroke Recovery with Consistency

What you should know: *Without consistency, the new connections in your brain will fade and you might lose all your hard work.*

While there is no magic pill for stroke recovery, you can speed up your results by being consistent with your rehabilitation. When the brain has consistent stimulation daily practice (or practice every other day), you will reinforce and strengthen the new connections in your brain faster, which will help you see faster results. So be sure to stick to your regimen.

5. Conquer Post Stroke Paralysis

What you should know: *There's so much hope for recovering from post stroke paralysis!*



When we say that recovery is possible at any stage of recovery, we're including paralysis in that statement. You can work to overcome post-stroke paralysis by doing the following:

1. Performing passive rehab exercises to activate neuroplasticity.
2. Visualize yourself doing these exercises as well (mental practice) to activate neuroplasticity even more.
3. Keep going even if you aren't seeing results (it could take a while).
4. Celebrate when you start to see small signs of movement!
5. Move onto active exercise when you start to regain more movement.

We have oversimplified it here, and you can learn more in our guide to curing post stroke paralysis.

6. Always Strive for a Full Recovery

What you should know: *There's always hope for a full recovery.*

By now, you might think that we're overly optimistic about stroke recovery – and that's the point! You see, when you fall under the limiting beliefs of a poor stroke prognosis (for example, being told that you'll be stuck in a wheelchair for the rest of your life) then you fall under the nocebo effect where bad things become true simply because you believe that it will come true. Not cool.

We would much rather have you believe in a full recovery because it puts you under the placebo effect, where good things become true because you believe they will come true. This isn't to say that you won't have to work really hard, because you will. But believing in yourself will help you achieve a higher recovery than anyone predicted.

7. Know That You Will Experience Different Side Effects from Other Stroke Patients

What you should know: *Every stroke is different and therefore every stroke recovery will be different.*

It's important to avoid comparing your recovery to someone else's. You might heal faster than some and slower than others. Try not to bog yourself down with comparison and instead focus on the next step in front of you.

8. Ask Your Doctor About the Location of Your Stroke

What you should know: *The location of your stroke will have a significant impact on your side effects and recovery process.*



Typically, right-side strokes result in very different side effects than left-side strokes. Understanding which part of the brain was affected by stroke can help you anticipate and make sense of the side effects that you experience. (For example, if you had a left-side stroke and your language center was damaged, it may result in a language disorder known as aphasia.)

9. Ask About the Size of Your Stroke Too

What you should know: *The size of your stroke will have a significant impact on your recovery, too.*

Strokes happen in a wide spectrum of sizes. Some stroke patients sustain TIA's, which are 'mini strokes' and often result in mild/moderate side effects. Some patients recover in 6 months or a few years.

Other stroke patients sustain massive strokes, which result in severe side effects that require intensive rehabilitation to treat. Some patients take decades to recover from massive stroke. By asking your doctor the size and location of your stroke, you'll have a good sense of what to expect on the road to recovery.

Read: Recovering from a Massive Stroke: Symptoms, Treatments, & Timeline

10. Get Tons of Sleep – Your Brain Needs It

What you should know: *It's natural to crave lots of sleep after stroke, and it's often best to listen to your body and sleep.*



A lot of stroke patients are startled by how much sleep they crave after stroke. Rest assured that sleeping a lot after stroke is perfectly normal. Your brain is hard at work healing itself right now, and that sucks up a lot of mental juice. Plus, *everyday activities might take up more energy than normal*, so you need to allow yourself to get extra rest to reenergize and heal.

11. Deal with Plateaus the Right Way

What you should know: *When your results slow down after stroke, it's a sign to double up, not back down.*

During stroke recovery, you will experience the fastest results during the first few months of recovery when your brain is in a heightened state of plasticity (meaning, your brain is trying really hard to recover). But after the first 3 months, your progress starts to slow down. This is considered a plateau, and it is not a sign that you should give up. Rather, it's a sign that you need to double down.

A stroke recovery plateau can be broken by shaking up your regimen with something different. As long as you're getting your reps in, you'll keep improving. Even if it's slower than before, progress is still a very good sign and should be celebrated.

12. Don't Go "Too Hard" and Exercise Too Much

What you should know: *There is such a thing as too much exercise.*

Exercising after stroke in order to regain movement is all well and good and highly encouraged. But don't over-do it. You know your body best, and if you feel like you're pushing too hard, then ease up. Take a day off. Get some sleep. Then get back at it.

Also, sometimes the tiredness of a workout won't hit you until the next day, so keep track of how much you're exercising and when you feel tired. This will help you optimize your routine so that you're not over-working yourself.

13. Find Support from Friends and Groups

What you should know: *Gathering support is absolutely critical for your success.*



Stroke recovery requires relearning some of the most basic tasks (like walking and getting dressed) and it requires tons of time and energy. In order to keep your spirits up, it's important to allow your friends and family to uplift you during this time. And if you don't have much support around to help you, then consider joining local or online support groups, like the one we have on Facebook.

14. Feed Your Brain with Feedback

What you should know: *Feedback provides your brain with extra stimulation and leads to faster results.*

The most effective rehabilitation will provide your brain with feedback. Feedback simply means that there's a clear 'success' or 'failure' cue for your brain. When there isn't [good feedback](#), your brain doesn't know the difference between a properly executed movement and a poor one. And you definitely don't want your brain to start training itself to move poorly. Plus, when there's feedback, the extra stimulation helps you see faster results.

15. Become Your Own Stroke Recovery Expert

What you should know: *Your recovery is in your hands, so keep educating yourself on all things stroke recovery.*

You've almost made to the end, and this was just the *super* short story. There is much more that every stroke survivor should know, that it can be overwhelming. That's why we created this blog.

We highly recommend that you start reading and researching all things stroke recovery so that you know what's in your own best interest. Your doctors and therapists can only take you so far. Once you're discharged or cut off insurance, your recovery is in your hands. You've got this, and we're always here to help.