

How to Recover from Stroke: A Step by Step Guide to Avoid the Worst Mistakes

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Learning how to recover from stroke can be overwhelming sometimes, but you came to the right place.

We're going to cover the best practices when it comes to recovering from stroke; starting with these 13 common mistakes and the best ways to fix them.

1. Forget What They Said – A Full Recovery IS Possible

The biggest mistake: Not believing in yourself

A full recovery is something that we believe in – and it's something that you need to believe in too. We've written about it extensively, but the crux of what you need to know is that [compensation techniques](#) can become an option. While they might be necessary in the beginning stages – it's possible to reach a point where you can push past them.

And if that made absolutely no sense, refer to our other article on [how to fully recover from stroke](#).

2. Crush Self-Doubt Once and For All

The biggest mistake: Slipping to the negative self-talk

Are you sick and tired of it yet? Of your therapists, friends, and family members telling you about the limitation of your recovery?

Please know this: You can achieve whatever you put your mind to. We know, we know, it sounds so cliché. But what we want you to understand is that hearing these negative beliefs about your recovery has a [psychological effect on you](#). The more you hear the negative talk, the more you believe it – and then you start talking negatively to yourself.

So it's time to say, NO. No thank you. I will not settle for a limited recovery and I am going to see this thing through until I get to where I want to be.

3. Make Repetition Your New Best Friend

The biggest mistake: Giving up on rehab exercises after a short period of no improvement

If you're practicing your rehab exercises sporadically, you're not going to see results. **Your brain needs a [high number of repetitions](#) in order to successfully rewire itself and heal.** This rewiring process is known as [neuroplasticity](#), and it's imperative for a successful rehabilitation. Without a high number of repetitions and a consistent rehab routine, your brain won't have what it needs to recover lost movement. So don't exercise in vain – make sure that you're utilizing a high number of repetitions so that your efforts produce results.

4. More Is Better... Except When It's Not

The biggest mistake: Exercising too much

While repetition is important, too much exercise can start to hinder your progress. You need a good amount of [rest and sleep](#) in order to successfully recover. During sleep, your brain stores information related to motor tasks that you performed that day. Think of it as your brain's opportunity to file important documents about motor recovery that it can access later. You don't want to skip out on that! So be sure to take breaks during your rehab exercises and get lots of sleep.

5. Blindly Moving Forward Will Make You Go Backwards

The biggest mistake: Approaching your rehab exercises indifferently

You need a vision, otherwise it'll be too easy to give up. When you have something that you're working towards, you're more likely to actively take steps to get there. When you don't have a goal, you're taking steps toward an unknown outcome, and there's no motivation in that. So set some realistic goals and keep your eye on the prize!

6. Admit It: You'll Never *Feel Like It*

The biggest mistake: Exercising when you "feel like it"

Stroke recovery can be tiring and exhausting. So if your ‘plan’ is to do your rehab exercises when you “feel like it” – it’ll probably never happen. You need something to hold you accountable to your goals, and [creating a rehab schedule](#) can help you get there.

7. You Need to Communicate with Your Brain

The biggest mistake: Doing rehab exercises without [clear success or failure cues](#)

Your brain needs to know if you’ve done something right or wrong. So when performing your rehab exercises, there’s a big difference between an exercise that gives you [direct feedback](#) and one that doesn’t. For example, if you’re working on hand mobility and you sit down and wiggle your hand back and forth, it’s not going to do much for you. Your brain needs clear and concrete signs that you’ve done something right or wrong in order to accelerate recovery. So when choosing rehab exercises, make sure that there’s clear feedback for you (and your brain) to work with.

8. Become a Witness of Your Own Improvement

The biggest mistake: Giving up

When we give up on something, it’s usually because we’re frustrated that we’re not getting to where we want to be. The best way to avoid giving up is to remain aware of the progress you’ve made. So after every exercise session, write down what you did and how you feel in a journal or exercise log. Then, you’ll be able to look back and see how far you’ve come! And it’s hard to give up when you know you’re making strides.

9. Plateaus Do Not Mean What You Think They Mean

The biggest mistake: Giving in to the plateau

[The plateau is real](#) – and it’s a true test of your patience and determination. While experts once thought that the plateau was the end of stroke recovery, new [studies](#) show that it’s far from the end. While your visible gains will slow down after a certain amount of time, it doesn’t mean that progress isn’t still underway. You just have to stay dedicated and *trust the process*. With your schedule, progress journal, and plenty of sleep, nothing should be able to shake you. Not even a plateau.

10. Find Friends to Lean On

The biggest mistake: Going it alone

As you progress through your stroke recovery, you’re likely to have a team of therapists and doctors supporting you. Once you’re on your own, though, it’s important not to stay alone! Make time in your schedule to socialize and relax with friends and family. Having others around can help ease any depression and anxiety that might creep up on you during your recovery.

Our [stroke support group on Facebook](#) is a great place to find support from other stroke survivors.

11. Understand All the Possible Stroke Side Effects

The biggest mistake: Staying in the dark about possible side effects

There are many stroke side effects that don't develop until later on in recovery, like emotional lability. By staying on top of the potential side effects that you may experience, you can avoid the freak out when something goes wrong. We have written about [stroke side effects](#) in depth on the blog, and the [stroke support group](#) is also an excellent place to ask other survivors if they've experienced the same side effects that you are.

And always, always, always call 9-1-1 if you ever feel pain in your head, intense dizziness, or any other symptom that is seriously worrisome.

12. Keep Your Stroke Prevention Game Strong

The biggest mistake: Neglecting stroke prevention

Stroke prevention is absolutely essential for stroke survivors since one stroke increases your risk of a second. To manage your risk of recurrent stroke, a good place to start is our [stroke prevention guidelines](#) where we lay the groundwork for how to prevent a stroke.

13. Endlessly Experiment with Therapy Until You Find *the ONE*

The biggest mistake: Settling for a mediocre rehabilitation regimen

At the beginning of this article, we mentioned that rehab exercises should take center stage during your stroke recovery. Some of our favorite physical therapies are [Mirror Therapy](#) and [Constraint-Induced Movement Therapy](#). These are powerful programs that are particularly useful for upper body rehabilitation.

Another great therapy for fine motor skills is our very own [MusicGlove](#), which can help improve hand function through a therapeutic, musical game that's fun to play. And when you combine [MusicGlove with mirror therapy](#) – then some *serious* motor gains can occur.

You can also supplement your regimen with non-physical therapies that focus on boosting your mood and mind-body connection. Some popular examples are [Dance/Movement Therapy](#), [Tai Chi](#), and [Recreational Therapy](#).

No matter what you choose, keep searching and trying different rehabilitation options until you find the one that provides the most benefit to you.

And if you follow all 13 of these steps, then you will have a great foundation to build an amazing recovery upon.