

The Danger of Getting Too Much Exercise After Stroke

April 27, 2018



If you were concerned about not exercising enough after reading *7 Awful Things That Happen When You Skip Exercise After Stroke (4/13/2018)*, don't be alarmed. As long as you're moving every day, then you're doing great. **In fact, you actually don't want to push yourself too hard, as that can also have negative effects.** (You might end up like the guy above...)

To get the best results, you need to find the sweet spot between too much and too little and exercise "just enough." This article will help you find that balance.

How Much Exercise After Stroke Is Enough?

Since every stroke is different, every recovery will be different. Therefore, every stroke survivor will need a different amount of exercise. So it's hard to say how much you *in particular* should be exercising – but we'll do our best. Here's a quick rule of thumb:

Move a little every day – even passive exercise or stretching counts. And if you can move strategically, that's even better. Here's what we mean by "strategic:"

Developing a Strategy

Developing a strategy is simple. If you're trying to improve movement after stroke, then you need to practice therapeutic rehab exercises repetitively. The more you repeat each exercise, the better you will get at making that movement. That's how neuroplasticity works. Repetition helps rewire your brain.

So pick a muscle group that you want to improve, like your legs, and develop a regimen with several therapeutic leg exercises. The more you repeat each exercise, the more your leg mobility will improve.

How Much Is Too Much?

As you start to see improvement from your daily exercise, you might get really excited. But this excitement might cause you to get carried away, or you might fall into perfectionist tendencies. You might get so excited by your progress that you start ramping up your regimen aggressively. Perhaps you go from exercising 15 minutes every day to exercising for 2 hours a day. *Is that too much?*

There are two answers for this:

YES, it's too much if you feel exhausted after, and you feel fatigued the next day. If your rigor actually sabotages your results, then you're exercising too much.

But what if you feel okay? Then...

NO, it's not too much if you only feel a *productive* sense of tiredness after and it does not result in fatigue the next day. As you can see, stroke recovery requires listening to your body.

Listening to Your Body

Everyone is an expert on their own body (because you *lived* in it your entire life, after all). When you listen to your body, you will know when you're exercising too much. Symptoms like fatigue, spasms, and irritability are typical signs that you're simply exercising too much. If you feel any of those symptoms, just back off your regimen and scale things back down for a while. Remind yourself to be patient, and take a nice long nap.

Play the Long Game

These days it seems like fast results are highly valued and chased. The faster, the better. And while fast results are great and definitely achievable, you need to stay focused on the long game, not short-term results. For example, if you exercise daily for 2 hours a day – and this doesn't lead to fatigue, but it **DOES** burn you out – then you'll lose steam after a few weeks.

And while you achieved some results in the short-term, you won't see any long-term results because you burned yourself out.

Slow and Steady

On the other hand, if you exercise daily for just 15 minutes a day – but you keep this up for 3 months – then your movement will massively improve AND you'll have the energy and motivation to keep going. As you see your results gaining momentum, you have the motivation to stick to your trusty 15 minute regimen day in and day out.

Then, after 6 months of daily exercise, you will have results that surpass most people who have been recovering for *years*. **The slow, steady route is highly rewarded during stroke recovery.** And, in the long-term, actually produces faster results.

Exercising Just Enough

So there you have it. If you want to improve movement after stroke while avoiding negative side effects, then keep things simple, listen to your body, and move strategically every day.

Trust yourself and listen to your body. **When you feel like you're over-exercising, you probably are;** in which case you should just take a nap and scale things back for a while.

Play the long-game so that you can avoid burnout and see seriously amazing results in the long-term. Be patient and put in your reps. Trust that the results will come.