

How Long Does It Take to Drive Again After Stroke?

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“How long until I can drive again?” We hear this question A LOT in our stroke support group. And it’s understandable. With so many new variables accompanying stroke recovery, the uncertainty of whether or not you will be able to drive again can be frustrating and scary.

Here’s what you need to know:

Typical Timeline

Most stroke survivors report getting back to driving anywhere from immediately after stroke to two years post stroke...

That’s a pretty wide range, huh? The reason for this huge difference is that every stroke is different. Some strokes are far more severe than others, and therefore it will take some survivors longer to regain sufficient mobility to drive again.

So the question shouldn’t be, “How long until I can drive again?” Rather, the question you should be asking is, “How long until I can move my body normally?” Now we’re onto something.

Recipe for Driving

There's a very simple recipe for **regaining movement after stroke**, and it's this:

Repetition + consistency + hard work = recovery + the ability to drive again!

Let's break this down.

Repetition

In order to regain movement after stroke, you need to perform rehab exercises. The purpose of these rehab exercises is to retrain your brain how to make those movements.

Rehab starts in the brain.

Your brain relearns movement through the phenomenon of **neuroplasticity**, which is how your brain forms new neural connections (the connections between brain cells).

Each time you perform an exercise, you reinforce neural connections responsible for controlling your body. At first, these connections will be weak. But with time and practice, they can become strong. But only with **repetitive practice**.

We're talking *hundreds of thousands* of repetitions over the course of your recovery. If this sounds overwhelming, don't worry. That's why devices like **MusicGlove** exist – to help you get a high number of repetitions in a short period of time.

Consistency

So you've got the repetition down. What you need next is consistency.

If you perform 200 repetitions of arm exercises on Sunday but don't exercise your arms again until 11 days later, then the new neural connections in your brain will become weak during the break. (Please note that **rest is good** – just don't confuse rest with **procrastination!**)

In order to maximize healing and **speed your recovery along**, you need to be very consistent with your rehab regimen. If you plan to do arms every Wednesday and Sunday – don't miss a day! By remaining consistent, you give your brain the stimulation it needs to get better.

Hard Work

Lastly, you need a strong work ethic in order to regain movement and get back to driving as quickly as possible. This means creating a regimen with good repetition and sticking to it no matter what.

This doesn't mean allowing yourself to burn out. Rather, it means persevering even when you don't want to exercise.

The only person who can make you better is you. By sticking to your regimen and never giving up, you will achieve amazing results!

Getting Back to Driving

Driving is a full body activity. You need **good balance** in order to get into your car safely, and you need mobility in your legs, arms, and hands in order to operate a vehicle.

To determine how long it will take to get back to driving, take a look at how much progress you need to make in those areas. How much movement do you need to recover, how much help do you have, and what tools are available for you to use?

This will give you the best estimate of how long it will take to get back to driving.

Suspended License?

If your license was suspended after stroke, then you will need to retest with the DMV in order to get your license reinstated. You can work with your physical therapists to help make this happen safely.