

5 Ways to Treat Post Stroke Dementia – There IS Hope

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Although some believe that dementia is irreversible, there is enough research to prove that there's hope. So if you're looking for a way to treat dementia after stroke, you've come to the right place.

Today you'll learn:

- What post stroke dementia is
- How to diagnose the condition
- How to treat it using science-backed methods

What Is Post Stroke Dementia?

Post stroke dementia refers to *vascular dementia* that can develop after the brain sustains damage from a stroke.

Vascular dementia can cause cognitive problems like:

- Difficulty with thinking and reasoning
- Memory loss
- Confusion
- Decreased attention span
- Problems performing activities of daily living
- Difficulty making decisions and solving problems
- Visual orientation problems like hallucinations
- Language problems like aphasia

Please note that the presence of some of these problems, like aphasia, does not mean you have dementia; but it's a possibility. Try not to rush to any conclusions until you see your general practitioner for a formal evaluation.

Diagnosing Post Stroke Dementia

Your general practitioner may refer you to a specialist who can order tests to diagnose your potential condition. Some tests could include questions about your lifestyle, assessment of your mental abilities, blood tests, and brain scans. A common test for mental abilities is the MMSE – Mini Mental State Examination. You can [try it yourself here](#) – but know that your doctor is the best person to administer the test.

Treating Post Stroke Dementia

If your doctor has diagnosed you with post stroke dementia, it's best to explore all your treatment options. Below you will find 5 different treatments that you can try. See which one works best for you! We've organized them from the most conventional to the most unconventional...

1. See If Medication Can Help

Unfortunately, there are no medications that can cure dementia. However, **there are medications that can slow its progression** such as donepezil, galantamine, and rivastigmine. Talk to your doctor to see if they're a good fit for you.

Also, your doctor might prescribe medication to help with your risk factors, such as a cholesterol reducing medication. Be sure to take these medications as they might be able to slow the progression of post stroke dementia.

2. Reduce Your Risk Factors

Factors that increase your risk of heart disease and stroke also raise your risk of vascular dementia. Some of these factors are:

- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Diabetes
- Atrial fibrillation
- Eating a high fat diet
- Smoking
- Drinking too much
- Not exercising enough

If you have any of these risk factors, now is a great time to start treating them! Reducing your risk factors could help slow the progression of dementia.

3. Try the Ketogenic Diet

The ketogenic diet is a high fat, adequate protein, low carb diet. [Studies have shown](#) that the ketogenic diet can slow and even reverse symptoms of memory loss and cognitive impairment throughout all dementia stages.

That's pretty impressive. However, the ketogenic diet should only be tried if your doctor says it's okay. The ketogenic diet is very high in fat, which can worsen some preexisting stroke risk factors, like high cholesterol. As a result, the ketogenic diet could be detrimental to your health. So be sure to consult with your doctor before trying it.

For more information, see the article on the "Ketogenic Diet for Stroke Patients," November 20, 2015.

4. Give the MIND Diet a Try

Do you like carbs too much to try the ketogenic diet? Give the MIND diet a try instead.

The MIND diet combines both the heart-healthy DASH and Mediterranean diets, and it's really good for stroke recovery. Plus, it's much more flexible, which can make it easier to stick to.

A [preliminary study](#) showed that stroke survivor who followed the MIND diet had half the rate of cognitive decline as other stroke survivors. Although the study was preliminary, both the DASH and Mediterranean diets have [tons of research](#) backing their heart- and brain-healthy benefits.

The MIND diet is simple to follow, too. It involves focusing on eating 10 specific foods and avoiding 5 unhealthy foods. You can learn more in the article "Why the MIND Diet is the Bet Diet for Stroke Recovery", dated February 23, 2018.

5. Rewire Your Brain

The most important concept for stroke recovery is that *the brain heals through neuroplasticity*, and neuroplasticity is activated through repetitive practice. Whenever you repeatedly do something, you strengthen the neural connections responsible for that task. It's called "greasing the groove." Read more in article "How to Get Better Mobility After Stroke by "Greasing the Groove", dated March 5, 2018.

The stronger the connections become (or the greasier that groove gets), the better your skills become. That's why doing leg exercises over and over and over helps you get better at moving your leg. So, why not apply this concept to dementia recovery after stroke? Why not repetitively practice using your cognitive skills?

Read: "How to Treat Post Stroke Dementia with Cognitive Training" article, March 19, 2018.

Cognitive Training Could Help

The idea is that the more you practice using your memory and solving problems, the better you will get at those skills.

To help you get your practice in, there are plenty of brain training games, like NeuroNation, (<https://www.neuronation.com>) that include memory games and puzzles.

Studies have shown that playing memory games can help improve memory in patients with dementia. This is because the brain gets better at what you repeatedly practice.

A Reason for Hope

No one seems to be talking about using repetitive practice to improve dementia after stroke, but we think more people should! We already know that practicing leg exercises will help improve leg function, so it only makes sense that practicing memory exercises will help improve memory. You'll never know if repetitive practice could help you until you try.

So pick a cognitive skill that you'd like to get better at, like memory, and start practicing that skill daily. Daily practice is how skills are made. It's how you grease that groove!

Recovering from Dementia After Stroke

So, if you think you have post stroke dementia, talk to your doctor to get an official diagnosis. And if you are diagnosed with dementia, don't give up hope! There are plenty of ways to slow its progression.

Taking necessary medication is an easy step, and you can also try the ketogenic or MIND diet as an added boost.

Also, keep greasing that groove and practice using your cognitive skills. Your brain gets better at what you repeatedly do.