

# How to Improve Memory After Stroke

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Impaired memory after stroke is a [cognitive impairment](#) that affects many stroke survivors.

Luckily, it can be treated the same way as most stroke side effects: by [activating neuroplasticity](#) and rewiring your brain.

To better understand this, we will first discuss exactly how memory works. Then, we will get to the treatment options. And at the end, we'll talk about how long it might take to improve your memory after stroke.

There's a lot of information in here, so let's get straight to it.

## Memory Is a Brain-Wide Process

The brain is composed of many different parts that each control different functions. For example, movement is controlled by the motor cortex; speech is controlled by the language center; etc.

Memory, however, is a brain-wide process.

In order to remember something, many different parts of your brain must work together. For this reason, memory requires serious brain power.

**While your brain is healing itself after stroke, it's already using up a lot of mental juice, which is why many stroke survivors struggle with the brain-wide process of memory.**

However, [the magic of neuroplasticity](#) is good for more than just regaining movement after stroke.

Neuroplasticity can help you sharpen your memory, too. But before we get into it, you need to first understand how memory works.

## The Stages and Terms of Memory

Memory occurs in [3 stages](#): Encoding, Storage, and Retrieval. There are also two terms for memory: short-term and long-term.

We will briefly discuss these technicalities because it will help you better understand how to improve your memory after stroke.

### **Encoding:**

There are 3 different ways that information can be encoded into your memory: through picture, sound, and meaning.

Everyone has different encoding preferences. For example, some people remember names based on faces (picture); others remember it by saying it out loud (sound).

### **Storage:**

Information that has been encoded can be held in our short-term memory for a brief amount of time, and then it can either be forgotten or stored in long-term memory.

### **Retrieval:**

This final stage refers to the process of getting information out of storage. This is where most of us struggle.

### **Short-term vs. long-term memory:**

According to [SimplePsychology.org](#), **short-term memory is stored and retrieved in sequential order.**

On the other hand, **long-term memory is stored and retrieved by association.**

For example, if you walk into a room and forgot why you went there, you can remember by going back to the room where you first thought about it.

Now that you know about the process of memory, let's talk about 3 great ways to improve it.

## 1. Improve Memory by Association

Our memories are encoded through picture, sound, and meaning; and long-term memory is encoded through association.

**Therefore, you can help improve your memory by focusing on association with pictures, sounds, and meaning.**

For example, if you have trouble remembering to take your medication, then *associate* the time of your medication with a picture of coffee. This will help you remember to take your medication each time you see your morning coffee.

You can also use rhymes to help you remember. For example, do you remember the grammar phrase "i before e except after c"? That phrase is popular because rhyming make it easier to remember.

Making associations to improve memory requires creativity. Luckily, even if the associations you make are strange, you're still more likely to remember them than if you didn't make an association at all.

## 2. Improve Memory through Visualization

Another great way to improve memory is by visualizing yourself remembering something.

For example, if you always forget to buy milk when you're at the store, then spend a little time visualizing yourself going to the store and buying milk. The mental movie will be full of images that are great for association. Then, when you actually go to the store, you'll have a greater chance of remembering milk because your mind associates the store with the image of milk!

[Visualization is a powerful method for activating neuroplasticity](#) and rewiring your brain – but only if you practice regularly.

## 3. Improve Memory through Practice

The best way to improve memory, by far, is through consistent practice of using your memory. While this may sound obvious, most of us don't intentionally practice using our memory.

So if you struggle with impaired memory after stroke, then put extra intention into making associations and visualizations with things that you want to remember.

It can also be a good idea to **play memory games** that sharpen your ability to encode, store, and retrieve memories. The more you use your memory, even if it's just in the form of games, the better you will become at remembering.

That's because practice triggers neuroplasticity, which changes your brain and helps strengthen your ability to remember.

For those who are unfamiliar with [neuroplasticity](#), it's the mechanism that your brain uses to rewire itself and form new neural connections. [Neuroplasticity is activated through repetition.](#)

The more you repeat something, the stronger the new connections in your brain become. That's why practice makes perfect.

## Other Tips to Help with Memory

Using association, visualization, and practice are three great ways to start improving your memory. But it's often useful to boost your memory right now.

So in the meantime, it's helpful to use [compensation techniques](#) to help you remember very important things, like medication schedules and doctor appointments.

It's a great idea for stroke survivors to keep a notebook handy at all times. This notebook will contain all of your important information.

Here are some ideas of what to log in your journal:

- A list of things to do every day, like doing rehab and checking your mail
- A list of names that you keep forgetting
- A list of medication you need to take and notes on how that medication makes you feel
- A list of questions for your next doctor visit
- A [log of your progress](#) so that you can see how far you've come!

Keep this notebook with you at all times, and you'll thank yourself during the moments that you need it.

# How Long Will It Take to Improve Memory?

You've learned a lot about what it takes to improve memory after stroke; and it may have you wondering how long this whole process will take.

The amount of time that it will take you improve your memory after stroke depends on these factors, among others:

- The severity of your stroke
- The amount of time you practice using your memory
- How consistently you practice

Those who experienced a severe stroke may take longer to improve memory after stroke because their brain will be very busy healing itself.

It may take longer for all the parts of the brain that contribute to memory to heal.

However, trust that the power of neuroplasticity will help you get better [as long as you practice consistently](#). Repetition is fuel for your brain to start rewiring and changing itself.

## Memory After Stroke

Overall, it's very possible to improve memory after stroke.

Practice using associations to help you remember important things. The more you practice, the better your memory will become.

And in the meantime, keeping a journal and taking good notes will help supplement for impaired memory after stroke.