

# How to Overcome Fatigue After Stroke

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Fatigue after stroke is a common stroke side effect that can have a significant impact on your recovery. Unfortunately, with so many different causes, fatigue after stroke remains ambiguous and misunderstood until you do your homework (i.e. reading articles just like this).

Today we're going to help demystify post stroke fatigue so that you can regain more control of your life. Ready to dig in?

## What's the Difference between Tiredness and Fatigue After Stroke?

Everyone feels tired after a long day, but fatigue after stroke is a different kind of tired. For many, fatigue after stroke feels like 'hitting a wall,' or feeling suddenly overwhelmed with the desire for sleep. Even if you just woke up from a nap two hours ago, you might want to go right back to bed if you suffer from fatigue after stroke.

This can interfere with your ability to engage in rehabilitation and social activities, which diminishes your quality of life. To help with this, we will discuss ways to treat and cope with post stroke fatigue.

But first, we want to make sure that you know that feeling fatigue after stroke is perfectly normal. About 40-70% of stroke survivors deal with fatigue after stroke, according to the [NSA](#).

Also, **post stroke fatigue does not always correlate with how much you do or exert yourself, and it doesn't always improve with rest.** This is what most stroke survivors find so confusing about fatigue after stroke.

## What Causes Fatigue After Stroke?

The causes of fatigue are both physical and emotional.

Here are some of the physical causes of fatigue after stroke:

- **Movement impairments**, which cause you to expend more energy than before stroke
- **Post stroke pain**, which requires immense energy to cope with
- **Sleeping disorders** like insomnia or [sleep apnea](#), which interfere with quality sleep
- **Medication** that has fatigue listed as a potential side effect
- **Your brain trying to heal itself**, which requires TONS of energy

There are also emotional causes of fatigue, which should not be overlooked, such as:

- **Post stroke depression**, which requires immense energy to deal with
- **Burnout** from all the hard work required during recovery
- **Anxiety** from fear of having another stroke or the sudden lifestyle changes caused by stroke

It's also important to know that **the severity of post stroke fatigue is not correlated with the severity of your stroke.** Even if you had a mild stroke, you can still feel extreme fatigue. With that said, let's move onto the treatment options.

## How Can You Treat Fatigue After Stroke?

First, let's discuss the solution that is often overlooked: adjusting preexisting medication. If you are currently taking medication and fatigue is listed as a side effect, bring it up to your doctor. (S)he may be able to switch your medication with something else that might not cause fatigue.

Now let's discuss a solution that requires some energy investment: exercise. **Believe it or not, spending energy on exercise now can help *reduce* fatigue in the long run.** One [study](#) associated fatigue after stroke with limited exercise capacity. This means that stroke has lowered your ability to exercise, and movement now requires more energy than before. **The study concluded that treadmill training could help you rebuild stamina.** By doing this, you will eventually start to use less energy to perform the same activities, which will help reduce fatigue.

# How Can You Cope with Fatigue After Stroke?

But what if you aren't taking any fatiguing medication and exercising more isn't a feasible option? At that point, it's best to start learning how to cope with fatigue so that you can make things easier on yourself.

## Here are 8 tips that can help:

1. Listen to your body and don't push if it doesn't feel right.

While hard work and discipline will help you recover from stroke faster, it won't work if you push too hard and burn yourself out! If your body is begging for sleep, then let yourself sleep. Even if you had preexisting plans with friends or had intentions to do therapy that day, it's best to listen to your body than push too hard and suffer the consequences.

2. Communicate your energy levels with those around you.

When you're feeling particularly drained, it might not show on the outside; so it's important to let others know how you're feeling. Snapping at someone because you're fatigued is easier to forgive than snapping at someone for no particular reason.

3. Take naps when your body wants them.

Although naps don't always help with fatigue, they often do for many stroke survivors. So when your body needs sleep, let yourself sleep! You may be shocked by how much sleep you crave, but know that it's perfectly normal. Give your brain the quality healing time that it needs and sleeeep.

4. Adopt a slower lifestyle.

Trying to do too much is a big energy drain. If you want to reduce fatigue after stroke, then it's best to slow down and do things one at a time.

Some stroke survivors are literally forced to slow down and single-task because of their stroke side effects. Others will have to consciously remind themselves to slow down and conserve energy for the rest of the day.

5. Give yourself more time to do everything.

The movement impairments that often accompany stroke can slow you down a lot. In order to prevent yourself from feeling rushed, which is a big energy drain, give yourself extra time to do everything.

6. Become wiser by keeping track of your energy patterns in a journal.

Through your daily life, you might feel like your fatigue is unpredictable and sudden. But sometimes there's a pattern; and when you're aware of your patterns, you can prepare yourself accordingly. This is what stroke recovery journals are great for.

Try to keep a log of your daily energy levels and activities. You may notice that you feel particularly fatigued the day after a big day. Or you may notice that you feel fatigued when you skip your mid-morning nap.

The only way to notice these patterns is to write it down.

#### 7. Try doing gentle exercise daily.

Some stroke survivors are fatigued by "small" activities like getting dressed in the morning (that certainly don't feel small!). This illustrates how movement requires much more energy of you.

A surprising way to reduce the amount of energy required for movement is to move more. This will help improve your movement impairments and free up some energy for the rest of your day.

At first, this will be a very demanding endeavor. For a while, getting dressed in the morning might count as your daily exercise because it fatigues you so much. But after a while, you'll be able to do more and more.

As you improve, it's important to keep pushing yourself (but not too much). When you're ready, try to go on daily walks. This will help build your stamina and reduce fatigue in the future.

#### 8. Seek support from others.

Lastly, you don't have to go through this alone. Seek support from friends, family, therapists, and support groups. Knowing that you're not alone can provide the emotional support you need to keep progressing down the road to recovery.

## Conquering Fatigue After Stroke

Overall, fatigue after stroke is very common side effect that can interfere with your quality of living and ability to participate in rehabilitation. Movement impairments after stroke, which are also very common, are a big cause of fatigue because movement demands much more energy after stroke. In these cases, fatigue after stroke will naturally decrease as you work to overcome your movement impairments and improve your stamina through rehab exercise.

Luckily, you don't have to do this alone. Seeking the help of friends and family is a very wise decision to keep you steady on the road to recovery.