

Benefits of TENS Therapy for Stroke Rehab

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The benefits of TENS therapy for stroke rehab go a little farther than you'd think. In this article, you'll learn what TENS therapy is, how it works, and what the benefits of TENS therapy are. Let's get started.

What Is TENS Therapy?

Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation therapy is electrical stimulation that's applied to your skin to provide extra stimulation to your nerves and muscles. If we take it apart, "transcutaneous" means "applied to the skin," so it's pretty straight forward now that you know your word parts.

What is TENS Therapy Used For?

TENS therapy is commonly used to relieve pain from arthritis, fibromyalgia, tendinitis, injuries, and general bodily pain. While TENS therapy is commonly used for pain, it can also be used as an effective addition to your stroke rehabilitation efforts.

Is TENS Therapy Effective?

To delve into the effectiveness of TENS therapy, we'll look into one [study](#) where participants were divided into 4 groups who received either:

- Nerve stimulation by itself
- Nerve stimulation combined with task-related training (combination therapy)
- Only task-related training and no nerve stimulation
- Nothing at all (the control)

The results: After 20 one-hour sessions, the combination therapy group showed statistically significant improvement over the control group. Most importantly, those gains still existed at a follow-up one month later.

How TENS Therapy Works

For a little background, let's first discuss what a stroke is. This will help provide insight into the benefits of TENS therapy for stroke.

A stroke occurs when an artery in the brain either bursts or becomes blocked. Side effects from a stroke vary case by case, sometimes resulting in impaired movement on one side of the body. As a result, the unaffected side of the body works harder to compensate for the weakened side. That's when TENS therapy comes into play.

During TENS therapy, the electrical stimulation makes you more aware of the subtle muscle contractions in your affected limb(s), allowing your affected muscles to relearn movement and regain strength.

Benefits of TENS Therapy

The most important benefit of TENS therapy is the ability to regain muscle movement after stroke. For stroke survivors who are left with hemiparesis or other versions of paralysis, TENS therapy can help your muscles regain movement through nerve and muscle stimulation.

For best results, TENS therapy should be used in combination with your rehab exercises, according to occupational therapist [Katie Smith](#). The combination of muscle stimulation while using those muscles to perform tasks will allow you to retain the muscle movement much better. However, if you're unable to move your muscles at all, you can still benefit from TENS therapy by itself without any accompanying exercises – your gains will just be smaller.

If you are a stroke survivor interested in gaining more movement in your affected limb(s), talk with your therapist to see if TENS therapy is right for you.