

Sensory Reeducation Exercises After Stroke

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Do you feel numbness sometimes? Do you have trouble feeling different temperatures like hot or cold? If so, then you may have a sensory impairment that occurs when stroke affects the way your brain interprets your senses.

Specifically, if stroke damaged your **right side of the brain** or your **parietal or occipital lobe**, then you may develop problems with sensation. This can manifest as **loss of sensation** such as **numbness** or **the inability to feel heat or cold**. It can also manifest as tingling or **hypersensitivity**, where you feel too much sensation.

Although these symptoms range across the board, they can all be addressed by one solution: *sensory reeducation exercises*. **Sensory reeducation exercises simply reteach your brain how to interpret your senses.**

Just like you can do physical therapy exercises to regain movement after stroke, you can do sensory reeducation exercises to regain sensation after stroke.

Sensory Reeducation Exercises

Below you will find a list of exercises that you can do to help restore your brain's ability to interpret your senses. All of the exercises involve your sense of touch. Each time you touch something, you send sensory stimulation to your brain and encourage your brain to rewire itself.

Try to **repeat each exercise at least 10 times** and practice for about 10-15 minutes a day. Remember, **repetition and consistency** are the most important things for a speedy recovery!

Now, let's get into the exercises.

5. Tabletop Touch Therapy

Gather together objects with different textures and place them onto a table in front of you. Then, without looking at the objects, pick them up and feel them. Try to distinguish the difference between textures. Some examples of objects to grab are soft scarves, rough sandpaper, fluffy cotton balls, rough Velcro, and cool silverware.

4. Texture Hunting

Fill a bowl with uncooked rice and bury different textured objects in it, like marbles, coins, Velcro strips, cotton balls, etc. Then, reach your hand into the bowl and try to find the objects without looking.

3. Texture Handling

Have someone place different objects in your hand with your eyes open. Sense how these objects feel. Once you've gone through all the objects and observed how they feel, perform the exercise again with your eyes closed. Put all your focus into feeling each object to emphasize that connection in your mind. Note any difference between how the objects feel with your eyes open or closed.

2. Temperature Differentiation

This exercise is particularly beneficial to stroke survivors who have trouble feeling heat or cold. Soak a cloth in cold water and soak another cloth in hot (but not scalding) water. Then, have someone place the cold cloth on your arm. Try to sense what that feels like.

After 30 seconds, have them switch the cold cloth with the warm cloth. Try to sense the difference in temperature. Then, close your eyes. Have your assistant place one cloth on your arm and try to determine if you're feeling heat or cold. Repeat this exercise back and forth alternating from hot to cold. If you don't have an assistant, you can perform this exercise yourself using your unaffected side to place the cloths on your arm.

1. Sensory Locating

Close your eyes and have a caregiver place her hand somewhere on your arm. Then, point to the area that you think she touched. If you don't point to the correct area, have your caregiver move your hand. Then, open your eyes to visually absorb the information. (Read: **The importance of feedback**) Feedback like this helps retrain your brain. It's like telling your brain, "I was not touched here, I was touched there."

Repeat this exercise at least 10 times, preferably more!

Once you master this exercise, switch it up by having your assistant touch you with different textured objects, like a Q-tip or metal spoon. Always keep your eyes closed during the exercise, and if you perform the exercise incorrectly, open your eyes once your caregiver moves your finger to absorb the feedback.

And that's it!

Remember to repeat each exercise at least 10 times. Be patient with the process and have faith that if you keep up these exercises consistently, you will start to regain your ability to feel sensation normally again.