

The Importance of Exercise after Stroke

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We all know that exercise is good for us. But have you ever wondered how far the benefits go? And did you know that staying active is extra important for stroke survivors too? Indeed, exercise after stroke is imperative for a healthy recovery. Here's what you need to know:

Why We Love Exercise

That's right, we used the L-word. We *love* exercise because it can help lower your blood pressure, improve sleep, and reduce your risk of falling. Mentally, it can also help reduce depression, improve self-worth, and promote independence. Benefits like these are what every stroke survivor needs! So even if you feel like you can't exercise, there are ways for everyone to fit a little fitness into their day.

How to Exercise No Matter What

After a brain injury, it's easy to lose motivation to exercise. But if we stay sedentary for too long, all sorts of health issues start to erupt. Here's how to stay active no matter what your limitations are – just consult with your physician first to make sure that it's safe for you.

Exercise with Severe Limitations

While exercise with severe limitations might seem like a wild idea, it's actually highly encouraged. For starters, severe limitation includes paralyzation or severe weakness on one side of the body (also known as hemiparesis). This type of impairment can lead to significant amounts of time spent in bed, so try sneaking a little activity into your day by performing exercises lying down or upright in a chair. Some examples include neck stretches, knee lifts, or any type of assisted movements. Little by little, try to target the joints and muscles that you aren't using to avoid developing stiffness.

Exercise with Moderate Limitations

Moderate limitations include significant weakness in one limb. If movement in one leg is impaired, try to exercise using a stationary bike and see if you can strap both feet to the pedals. If your legs are fine but your arm needs help, then you can enjoy the freedom of walking and *dancing*, which are both excellent forms of exercise. We mean it, [dance movement therapy](#) really does help.

Exercise with Mild Limitations

When you can move all four limbs despite weakness in one or two of them (i.e. mild limitations), then you have even more options. You can try activities like swimming, walking, or even using a stair stepper. As long as you get moving, that's all that matters.

Exercise with No Functional Limitations

With no functional limitations, the world is your oyster. Try experimenting with different hobbies and sports until you find something you love. Then you won't even have to motivate yourself to do it – the passion will already be there!

When to Stop Exercising

We know, we know, we just told you to start exercising and now we're telling you to stop? Well, not quite. All we ask is that you practice *intuitive exercising*. If you ever feel dizzy, have trouble breathing, or experience any pain – especially chest pain – that's your body's way of telling you to stop. And when your body tells you it wants to stop, listen to it.

So show yourself some love and start working some exercise into your daily routine. The most important thing is to *listen to your body* and do what feels right.