



EXERCISE & MOBILITY



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This guide will help to answer questions about how to get enough exercise and improve your mobility after a stroke. It will tell you why **regular physical exercise** is one of the most important things you can do for your recovery.

SO WHAT DO WE MEAN BY EXERCISE AND MOBILITY?

Exercise is **any** activity that uses energy -even ordinary daily activities like housework, gardening and walking the dog.

Mobility is the ability to move physically in a functional way. The more mobility you have the more independent you can be because you can do more everyday functions on your own.

WHY BOTHER?

It can be hard to motivate yourself so one important question you need to answer is **WHY BOTHER?**

Exercise makes your everyday mobility easier.

It will help you with daily activities, such as walking, climbing stairs, eating, personal care, and dressing. In other words exercise will improve your mobility and independence. It will help you to:

- » Live longer and have a better quality of life
- » Be in a better mood
- » Have more energy
- » Be healthier
- » Reduce stress

The benefits of regular exercise are endless!

EXERCISE TRAINS THE BRAIN

The most exciting news from the frontiers of brain science is that physical exercise triggers changes in the brain that can make up for lost function after a stroke. The term for that change is neuroplasticity. Brain cells surrounding the damaged area change, so they can take on the functions of the damaged cells -and that is really helped by physical exercise. In simple terms **exercise trains the brain.**

Talk to any stroke survivor who exercises regularly and they will tell you that exercise has really benefited them in their recovery.

STAYING SAFE AND AVOIDING INJURY

Here are some things you can do:

- » Consult your doctor or other health professional before starting any exercise program.
- » Choose a safe place to exercise.
- » Slowly build up the amount of time you exercise.
- » You should be able to talk and exercise at the same time.
- » If you feel dizzy or have trouble breathing, stop exercising **IMMEDIATELY**
- » If you experience any of the following, seek medical attention:
 - chest pain or pressure
 - pain or aching in the jaw or neck, down the left or right arm, or across the shoulders and back,
 - irregular heart rate

GETTING STARTED

The steps to make sure you get enough exercise are:

1. Set a goal
2. Start small
3. Be creative
4. Make it fun
5. Don't give up

1. SET A GOAL

Ask yourself questions like:

What would I like to be able to do physically that is hard to do now?

For example, do you want to be able to stand for longer, have stronger arms, walk further or be more flexible?

Focus on setting gradual, achievable goals and improving a little at a time.

2. START SMALL

Start by doing what you can, and then look for ways to do more. Start out slowly. After a while try to build up your activities—do them for longer and more often. If you start small you are more likely to stick with it and you will get better results.

3. BE CREATIVE

Physical activity in any form is good news. Try to see where you can “sneak” in more activity in your daily life.

Change it up - be open to trying new things.

Try using YouTube exercise videos, or going to the mall if the weather isn't good. Once you get started you'll be surprised how creative you can be!

4. MAKE IT FUN!

Try activities that you have fun doing. If it is fun it will become a habit.

Team up with a friend or a group. It will keep you motivated and make it more social.

Tell your friends about your exercise goals and have them help you to keep you on track. There are all sorts of things you can try like:

- » Yoga
- » Cycling
- » Playing games with your kids or grandchildren
- » Aqua Fitness
- » Stair Climbing

5. DON'T GIVE UP!

Don't give up. Just keep going, and know that some exercise is always better than no exercise.

Make sure you set goals for exercising and remember to reward yourself when you have achieved them.

Remember:

- every little bit adds up and makes a difference.
- regular physical exercise is one of the most important things you can do for your recovery after a stroke.

After Stroke

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Sincere thanks to the Stroke Recovery Association of British Columbia, an affiliate of After Stroke, a program of March of Dimes Canada, for creating this resource - your experience and support have added incredible value.

For more information on Guides to Recovering from a Stroke visit our website at afterstroke.marchofdimes.ca