Recovery Tips

FOR STROKE SURVIVORS

FlintRehab

For stroke survivors and caregivers, learning everything possible about the road ahead is important. The team at Flint Rehab is passionate about stroke recovery, and we have a lot of experience to share. Since we know you can get the facts anywhere, we've put together 15 of our best tips—including plenty of unconventional advice that you won't find anywhere else.

Let's get to it.

RECOVERY TIP 1

Recovery is always possible—even decades after a stroke.

Someone once asked us, “It’s been 13 years since my stroke, is there any hope for improvement? Or will it just be wasted effort?”

Our answer was a resounding "YES! There’s always hope."

We’ve seen a patient 24 years post-stroke decide that, after a decade without rehab, he wanted to improve hand function. Although his family though it would be a waste of effort, he tried anyway.

And guess what? He succeeded.

The brain is *always* capable of healing. Any age. Any stage of recovery.

Never give up.

RECOVERY TIP 2

Make repetition your best friend.

Repetition is the number one driver of success during stroke recovery because repetition helps activate neuroplasticity—the mechanism that your brain uses to rewire itself and form new connections.

That means the more you practice something, the stronger the connections in your brain become.

If you want to improve movement in your arm after a stroke, for example, then you need to practice arm exercises repetitively.

Each time you repeat an action, new connections strengthen in your brain.

Repetition is how you'll rebuild your skills.

RECOVERY TIP 3

Consistency is key in speeding up your recovery.

While there is no magic pill for stroke recovery, you can speed up your results by being consistent with your rehabilitation.

When the brain has consistent stimulation through regular practice—daily or every other day—you will reinforce and strengthen the new connections in your brain faster, which will have you seeing faster results.

So be sure to stick to your regimen!

Without consistency, the new connections in your brain will fade and you might lose all your hard work.

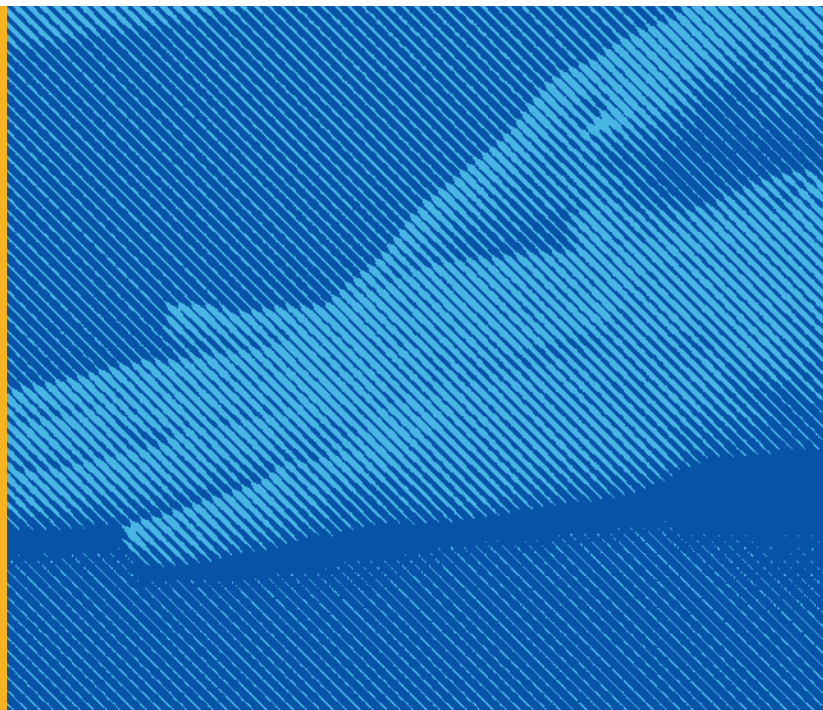
RECOVERY TIP 4

Know that your recovery is unique to you.

Because stroke can happen in different areas of the brain, every stroke is different. Depending on which part of the brain is affected, different functions can be impaired. With so many variables to consider for each patient—both known and unknown—it can be difficult for medical professionals to provide or prescribe the 'perfect' rehab treatment.

That's why it's important to avoid comparing your recovery to that of others. You may heal faster than some and slower than others. Try not to bog yourself down with comparison and instead focus on the next step in front of you.

As each stroke is different, each recovery will be different.



RECOVERY TIP 5

Avoid permanent lopsidedness from learned nonuse.

During stroke recovery, the phrase "use it or lose it" is commonly used by therapists to describe the clinical condition of learned nonuse.

Learned nonuse occurs when you completely stop using your affected limb. After a while your brain literally forgets how to use it.

The best way to avoid learned nonuse is to move your affected limbs at least a little bit every day. Even passive range of motion helps, like assisting your affected muscles through their full range of motion.

The phrase "use it or lose it" is backed by science. If you don't use your muscles, your brain will forget how to use them.

RECOVERY TIP 6

Learn how to permanently treat spacticity.

Botox injections can provide relief from spacticity. Although they work well, they're a temporary solution. Once it wears off, you'll need more injections.

For long-term relief from painful spastic muscles, you need to address the root cause, which is brain-muscle communication. When stroke disrupts your brain's ability to communicate with your muscles, they tense up in order to protect themselves.

Therefore, to treat spasticity, you'll need to reconnect your mind to your muscles with rehab exercise. By activating neuroplasticity, your brain will regain control over your spastic muscles and they will relax.

Botox may be a temporary fix, but rehab exercise is a permanent fix.

RECOVERY TIP 7

Ask your doctor about the location of your stroke.

Typically, right-side strokes result in very different side effects than left-side strokes.

Understanding which part of the brain was affected by stroke can help you anticipate and make sense of the side effects that you experience.

If you had a left-side stroke and your language center was damaged, for example, it may result in a language disorder known as aphasia.

The location of your stroke will have a signicant impact on your side effects and recovery process.

RECOVERY TIP 8

Ask about the size of your stroke too.

Strokes happen in a wide spectrum of sizes. Some stroke patients sustain TIA's, which are 'mini strokes' and often result in mild/moderate side effects. Some patients recover in 6 months or a few years.

Other stroke patients sustain massive strokes, which result in severe side effects that require intensive rehabilitation to treat. Some patients take decades to recover from massive stroke.

By asking your doctor the size and location of your stroke, you'll have a good sense of what to expect on the road to recovery.

The size of your stroke will have a signicant impact on your recovery.

RECOVERY TIP 9

Always strive for a full recovery.

By now, you might think we're overly optimistic about stroke recovery—and that's the point! When you fall under the limiting beliefs of a poor stroke prognosis, like being told that you'll be in a wheelchair for the rest of your life, you fall under the nocebo effect. That's when bad things become true simply because you believe they will. Not cool.

We would much rather have you believe in a full recovery. That puts you under the placebo effect, where good things become true because you believe they will. This isn't to say you won't have to work really hard, because you will. But believing in yourself will help you achieve a higher recovery than anyone predicted.

There's always hope for a full recovery.

RECOVERY TIP 10

Get tons of sleep— your brain really needs it.

A lot of stroke patients are startled by how much sleep they crave after stroke. Rest assured that sleeping a lot after stroke is perfectly normal.

Your brain is hard at work healing itself right now, and that sucks up a lot of mental juice.

Everyday activities might take up more energy than normal, so you need to allow yourself that extra rest to reenergize and heal.

It's natural to crave lots of sleep after stroke, and it's often best to listen to your body and sleep.

RECOVERY TIP 11

Deal with plateaus the right way.

During stroke recovery, you'll experience the fastest results during the first few months of recovery when your brain is in a heightened state of plasticity (meaning your brain is trying really hard to recover). But after the first three months, your progress starts to slow down.

This is considered a plateau, and it is not a sign that you should give up.

It's a sign that you need to double down.
Recovery won't stop as long as you don't stop.

When your results slow down after stroke, it's a sign to double up, not back down.

RECOVERY TIP 12

Don't go "too hard" by exercising too much.

Exercising after stroke in order to regain movement is always highly encouraged—but don't over-do it.

You know your body best.

If you feel like you're pushing too hard, then ease up. Take a day off. Get some sleep. Then get back at it.

There is such a thing as too much exercise.

RECOVERY TIP 13

Feed your brain with feedback.

The most effective rehabilitation will provide your brain feedback—which means that there's a clear 'success' or 'failure' cue for your brain.

You need proper feedback in order to rewire your brain effectively.

When there isn't good feedback, your brain doesn't know the difference between a properly executed movement and a poor one.

Feedback provides your brain with extra stimulation and leads to faster results.

RECOVERY TIP 14

Do what Michael Phelps did everyday.

Michael Phelps, 18 time Olympic gold medalist, used visualization to prepare for his swim meets. Before each meet, he spent time visualizing winning or dealing with complications. That way, when complications arose, he was already wired to deal with them.

You can apply the same research-proven technique to stroke recovery.

Visualization helps rewire the brain after stroke by triggering neuroplasticity the same way that physical practice does. While this technique can't substitute for physical therapy, combining the two can lead to better results.

Visualization is a powerful neuroscience technique that helps rewire the brain and improve performance.

RECOVERY TIP 15

Become your own stroke recovery expert.

We highly recommend researching all things stroke recovery so that you know what's right for your body. Your doctors and therapists can only take you so far, and your recovery is ultimately in your hands. You've got this, and we're always here to help.

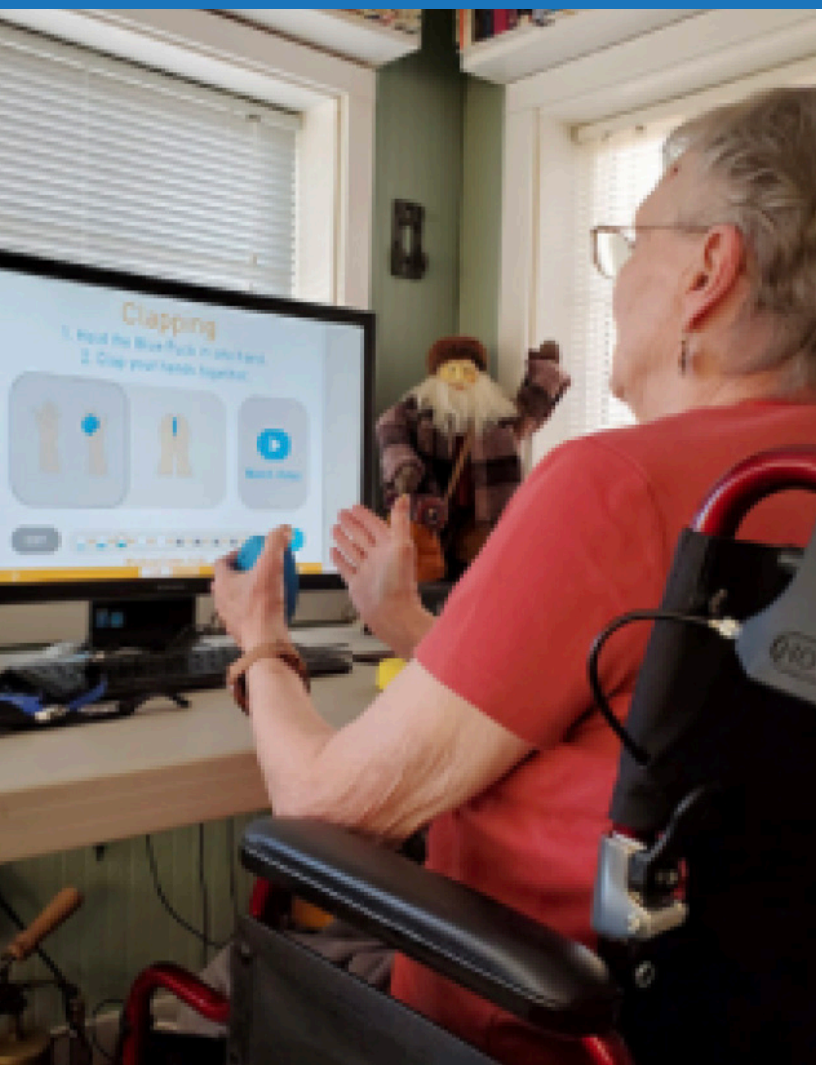
To boost stroke education and awareness, we send a weekly newsletter every Monday with five articles about stroke recovery. Keep an eye out for it—it's always chock full of great information for stroke patients and caregivers. Talk soon.

Your recovery is in your hands, so keep educating yourself on all things stroke recovery.

Improve mobility **even faster** with FitMi home therapy.

FitMi Home Therapy Program harnesses the power of neuroplasticity and repetition to improve your mobility. The more you practice, the more your brain has the stimulation it needs to create new neural pathways.

Start your home therapy with FitMi.
Learn more today at **flintrehab.com/product/fitmi**



"The results we've achieved through the use of the FitMi system have exceeded our expectations. Since using these systems, the improvement in her movement and control of her left side have been amazing. We are now very optimistic that she will recover to the point of being able to function, not 100% as she did before, but darn close to it."

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Mike, October 15, 2020