



American Stroke Association®  
A division of the American Heart Association.

Together to End Stroke®

# BENEFITS OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND EXERCISE AFTER A STROKE

Both physical activity and exercise play an important role in your post-stroke recovery. Both have shown to improve:

HEALTH FUNCTION



MUSCLE STRENGTH



BRAIN HEALTH



QUALITY OF LIFE



Before you begin a new physical activity program, consult with your health care team to evaluate your current health and ability. It's important that you begin at a level that is appropriate and safe for you.

## EXAMPLES OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND EXERCISE AND THEIR BENEFITS



### GENERAL PHYSICAL ACTIVITY:

Any movement that requires energy, such as gardening, grocery shopping, doing laundry or walking.

**The benefits include:**

- Improved day-to-day functioning
- Improved quality of life
- Improved mood
- Improved brain health
- Reduced chance of another stroke
- Improved muscle strength, endurance and flexibility



### AEROBIC EXERCISE:

Any physical activity that uses large muscles and increases your heart rate, such as cycling (including recumbent bike if you have mobility issues), running or dancing.

**The benefits include:**

- Improved balance
- Improved mood
- Reduced anxiety
- Improved quality of life
- Improved mental functioning (logic/reason)
- Lowered blood pressure
- Improved muscle strength, endurance and flexibility
- Stronger health and lungs



### STRENGTH EXERCISE:

This type of exercise includes weights, Pilates, push ups, sit ups or repeated actions such as standing up and sitting down.

**The benefits include:**

- Improved stability
- Improved mood
- Increased self-confidence
- Improved quality of life
- Increased ability to do things around the house
- Improved bone density
- Maintained healthy weight
- Improved muscle tone
- Improved muscle strength, endurance and flexibility



### FLEXIBILITY EXERCISE:

This type of exercise includes yoga, Pilates, tai-chi and gentle stretches.

- Improved range of motion
- Improved balance
- Reduced risk of injuries
- Reduced stiffness
- Reduced pain in your joints and muscles
- Increased blood flow to your muscles

# SAFETY

## DON'T



- **Overexercise** or push yourself too hard.
- **Worry** if you experience **some soreness**. Soreness is common with strength training exercises. (However, it shouldn't be experienced for more than 24-48 hours after a workout.)
- Engage in **intense activity** or exercise that might put you at **risk for a fall**.
- Do very intense, quick or **forced stretching** that can strain your joints.

## DO

- Include periods of **rest**.
- Include **gentle stretches** after your exercise.
- Have **someone with you** while you exercise. Or, better yet, have them **join in your workout**
- Stay **hydrated**. Keep breathing.



Make sure the area where you exercise is safe.  
Remove any loose rugs or objects that might get in the way.  
Remember to pace yourself. Pick physical activities and exercises you enjoy — you will be more likely to keep moving!

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