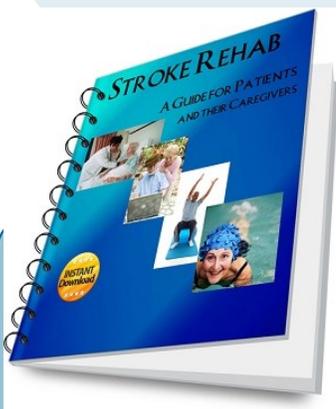


Stroke Recovery Tips

www.stroke-rehab.com

Taking Care of Your Health After Stroke



Stroke Rehab: A Guide for Patients and their Caregivers

Exercise photos included

Visit <http://www.stroke-rehab.com/stroke-rehab-e-book.html#>

According to the National Stroke Association, 24 percent of women and 42 percent of men who have had a stroke will experience another stroke. One can reduce recurrent stroke risk by addressing medical conditions and making lifestyle changes.

In my practice, I am amazed when patients come in and have had no MD follow up after their discharge from the hospital and have no idea about risk factors and stroke. It's alarming when someone has been prescribed blood thinners yet don't have a MD following their bloodwork. It is very important if you have been subscribed blood thinners for your blood to be monitored to make sure the medicine dosage is correct. If your blood is too thick this can lead to dots and ischemic stroke, but if your blood is too thin, this can lead to a hemorrhagic or

bleeding stroke so it is important that your bloodwork is being properly monitored.

If you have been told you have atrial fibrillation or a-fib, you should follow up with a physician. If you have problems with blood pressure or have been prescribed blood pressure medication, you should be monitoring your blood pressure at home to make sure it is within a normal or acceptable range, and do not stop taking any blood pressure medicine (or any medication for that matter) without your doctor's approval or recommendation. It's also very important that your MD know all the medications you are taking so that they do not prescribe medications that interact adversely.

It's important to find out why you had a stroke if possible. Some strokes are a result of high blood pressure or diabe-

tes, others might be due to blockage of the carotid arteries in the neck, others may be due to clotting disorders or atrial fibrillation. Your MD may not always be able to find out what caused your stroke, but if a cause can be determined, you can work on solving the problem and hopefully preventing future strokes.

Besides following up with a MD post-stroke, it is important for stroke patients to evaluate their lifestyle habits. Habits that can increase your risk for stroke include smoking or tobacco use, overeating, lack of exercise, drug use, lack of sleep, and excessive alcohol use. In order to manage your future stroke risk, it is important to stop smoking, manage blood pressure & cholesterol, maintain a healthy weight, eat nutritiously and exercise. For more info about preventing recurrent stroke, visit <http://www.stroke.org/site/>.

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Improving Balance

Balance can be impaired after stroke due to many different factors including muscle weakness, decreased sensation in the legs/feet, lack of body awareness or where the limbs are in space, visual neglect or impaired vision, dizziness, damage to vestibular centers in the brain, impaired gait patterns, and lack of range of motion to name a few. Determining what is causing balance issues can help one know what exercises or activities are most important for treatment. If you are only doing leg strengthening exercises, you may be neglecting other issues that are causing balance problems.

Some of the treatments for impaired balance include supporting the body weight via a harness while standing/walking, functional task training working on balance while performing everyday household tasks, aquatic (pool) therapy, proprioceptive training to help make one aware of where their limbs are in space, weight bearing activities to the weaker leg, vestibular training to help decrease dizziness, stretches to improve range of motion, braces to help stabilize/protect body parts and improve gait, biofeedback, strengthening, visual training to help improve tracking or peripheral vision, cycling training, Tai Chi, balance training machines such as Biodex, and vision deprived

training where patient do exercises with the eyes closed.

If you are currently having difficulty with your balance, it is important to talk to your physical therapist about what specifically is causing your balance deficits and what is being done to address it. Don't feel like you have to except generic answers such as "because your leg is weak". Ask specifics such as which muscles are weak, and what other factors are contributing to deficits with balance. If you no longer are receiving therapy, pay attention to your body and try to determine what factors are causing balance problems so you can address specific issues.

How to Make Rehabilitation More Interesting



Following through with home exercise programs is often difficult unless a patient is very disciplined. It is important to find rehabilitation activities that you enjoy and to change activities so that your body does not become accustomed to doing the same exercises over and over. Here are some options to make exercising more interesting:

Circuit Therapy - With circuit therapy, you will go from one station to the next working on a specified exercise or activity for a short, specified amount of time at each station.

Aquatic Therapy - Pool therapy can be especially fun for patients that like to get in the water and the buoyancy of the water makes it easier to move around.

Tai Chi, Yoga, or Pilates - You can participate in various exercise classes that help with stress reduction, core strength, and balance. Make sure you work with an instructor that is familiar in working with stroke patients and that exercises are modified so

that you can perform them safely.

Participating in a Favorite Activity - Participating in your favorite leisure activities will be more interesting to you, and even though you may not be able to participate as before, you can modify how you approach the activity or just participate in certain components of the activity.

Music Therapy - Music can be incorporated into rehabilitation in various ways including active listening, songwriting, dancing or making up moves to music, playing an instrument, and singing.

Video Game Training— Video game systems such as Wii, Xbox, and Playstation can be incorporated into therapy to make movement more fun. Various sports, exercise, and balance games are available to play.

Virtual Reality - Patients can be immersed into a virtual setting that is created by a computer. This can be a fun and exciting experience and some programs allow for feedback on performance as well.

CAREGIVER CORNER: KEEPING UP WITH INFORMATION



A good practice for caregivers is to put together a journal or notebook that keeps track of not only medical but other helpful information. Items such as the following should be included:

Contact information for neighbors or friends that can help with errands such as yard work, shopping, or sitting with your loved one

Contact information for doctors and other medical professionals.

List of medications and dosages

A scheduling calendar

Summary of past medical history including any sur-

geries, hospitalizations, vaccinations or allergies

A copy of advanced directives (e.g. living will/ medical power of attorney)

A list of your needs so if anyone calls and asks how they can help, you can refer to your list

An emergency and family telephone list

A call log section to record important information obtained via phone that you do not want to forget

Daily or weekly notes regarding your loved one's symptoms, status changes, and overall health including things such as pain, fatigue, reaction to medicines or other symptoms

Daily routine and care information for your loved one that can easily be passed on to other caregivers or family members

A caregiver self-care checklist that lists things you should be doing to stay emotionally and physically fit as a caregiver. Review the list weekly to make sure you are taking care of yourself. Items on this list might include exercise, eating healthy, taking time for your self, reading, going to appointments, time away from your loved one, etc.

A good resource for caregivers for finding various forms and information about caregiving is <http://www.caregiverslibrary.org/home.aspx>.