



Neuroplasticity: Key to Stroke Recovery

by Kathy K. Sato, Licensed Acupuncturist



Many people who suffer from a stroke lose hope and resign themselves to their “new normal.” But it doesn’t have to be this way. Here are some important recovery ideas:

◆ **Heal the brain, heal the body.** When the brain is deprived of oxygen-rich blood during a stroke, it leads to brain damage. Although this damage cannot be reversed, it is possible to train other parts of the brain to take over specific tasks.

This process is called neuroplasticity. Neuroplasticity allows healthy parts of the brain to pick up the slack, thus helping to regain lost functions, such as movement and speech.

◆ **Repetition helps activate neuroplasticity.** In order to recover from a stroke, your brain needs a lot of repetition of exercises to successfully rewire itself and heal. The more repetitions performed, the more functions, such as your mobility, will

improve. But this doesn’t just apply to exercise. You can also regain most abilities (language and memory) by practicing these skills.

◆ **Stimulate key areas of the brain.** Alternative therapies such as acupuncture can stimulate key areas of the brain, helping to improve mobility and sensory issues. It can also help with fine motor skills, swallowing, balance, speech and vision.

◆ **Believe in recovery.** Our biggest obstacle is ourselves. Remember that recovery only stops when we stop believing in recovery! ■

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Prevent Yourself From Falling Backward

by Jason Dacumos, Owner, Physical Therapist, Makai Mobile Rehab

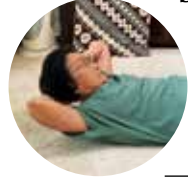
One of the most common causes of injuries in the elderly is due to falling backward. This type of fall can lead to serious injuries to the hips, spine, head, arm and/or wrists, depending on how someone lands. Ultimately, the best way to avoid serious injury is to prevent the fall from ever happening. One method of prevention is to strengthen muscles that pull forward when a posterior fall starts to occur. We are primarily talking about muscles in the front of the ankles, hip flexors and abdominals. Here are some exercises you can do to strengthen these pertinent muscles:



STRAIGHT LEG RAISES. Lie on your back with one knee bent. With the other leg kept straight, lift it up and down with your thigh and stomach tight, keeping your back flat. Do up to 3 sets of 10 reps per leg.



ABDOMINAL CRUNCHES. Lie on your back with your hands behind your head or crossed over your chest. Tuck your chin in and lift up just your head and shoulder blades. Do up to 3 sets of 10 reps.



If you continue to fall backward or have difficulty doing these exercises, it’s important that you consult with your primary care doctor or physical therapist. ■

TOE RAISES. In a standing position (sitting is ok if you have a fall risk), lift your toes and feet and feel the muscles in the front of your ankles engage. Do up to 3 sets of 10 reps for each foot (You may do both simultaneously).

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