News Release

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Stroke recovery chances step up with exercise, expert advises

Regular exercise can speed recovery for stroke survivors and may reduce their risk of having another stroke, according to a leading academic.

The advice from an expert in stroke medicine contrasts with commonly held fears that exercise may trigger a further stroke.

People who have been physically active before their stroke are more likely to make a good recovery but less is known about how exercise can affect recovery after a stroke.

Professor Gillian Mead has been researching the benefits of exercise on stroke recovery for more than 10 years. She will be speaking about her research at a public event this week as part of the Edinburgh International Science Festival.

Her findings reveal that a structured physical training plan – including aerobic, strength and balance training – can help stroke survivors to become more mobile, improve their balance and reduce their disability.

Professor Mead is currently investigating whether breaking up long periods of sitting or lying – so-called 'sedentary' behaviour – with short periods of movement might help to bring down the risk of having another stroke.

One in six people in Scotland will have a stroke in their lifetime and survivors can be left with varying degrees of disability. More than half of all people who survive a stroke require support to live independently.

Doctors in Edinburgh are now working with professional fitness trainers to integrate specialised exercise programs into mainstream care for stroke patients.

Professor Mead said: "We're working with fitness experts to determine the best 'exercise prescription' for stroke survivors. It's also important that we understand more about the factors that put patients off from taking part in exercise programs, and how we can motivate them to take advantage of the benefits."

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