

Rehabilitation for Neurological Disorders

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What conditions may benefit from neurological rehabilitation?

The nervous system is vulnerable to various disorders. It can be damaged by injuries, infections, degeneration, structural defects, and tumors, as well as disorders in the circulatory system. Disorders of the nervous system, which may be helped by physical medicine and rehabilitation, may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- vascular disorders - stroke, transient ischemic attack (TIA), subarachnoid hemorrhage, subdural hemorrhage and hematoma, and extradural hemorrhage
- infections - meningitis, encephalitis, polio, and epidural abscess
- structural, trauma, or neuromuscular disorders - brain, head, or spinal cord injury, Bell's palsy, cervical spondylosis, carpal tunnel syndrome, brain or spinal cord tumors, peripheral neuropathy, muscular dystrophy, myasthenia gravis, and Guillain-Barré syndrome
- functional disorders - headache, seizure disorder, dizziness, and neuralgia
- degenerative disorders - Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), Huntington's chorea, and Alzheimer's disease

The neurological rehabilitation team:

Neurological rehabilitation programs can be conducted while a person is a hospital inpatient, or on an outpatient basis. The neurological rehabilitation team revolves around the patient and family. The team helps set short- and long-term treatment goals for recovery and is made up of many skilled professionals, including the following:

- neurologist/neurosurgeon
- orthopaedist/orthopaedic surgeon
- physiatrist
- internist
- rehabilitation nurse
- dietitian
- physical therapist
- occupational therapist
- speech therapist/language therapist
- psychologist/psychiatrist
- recreational therapist
- audiologist
- chaplain
- vocational therapist

The neurological rehabilitation program:

The goals of a neurological rehabilitation program include helping the individual to return to the highest level of function and independence, and improving the overall quality of life for that individual - physically, emotionally, and socially. A typical neurological rehabilitation program helps to accomplish and/or may include the following:

- assistance with activities of daily living (ADLs) such as eating, dressing, bathing, using the toilet, handwriting, cooking, and basic housekeeping
- speech therapy (to help patients who are having trouble speaking, expressing their thoughts, or swallowing; to improve speech patterns, enunciation, and oral communication, in general)
- counseling (to deal with anxiety and depression)
- bladder and bowel retraining
- activities to improve control and muscle balance in the trunk, pelvis, and shoulder girdle
- an exercise program (to improve function, safety, and efficiency of movement; to prevent or postpone weakness caused by lack of use; to manage spasticity and pain; to maintain range of motion; to develop the maximum potential of muscle, bone, and respiration)
- social skills retraining
- gait and balance retraining
- nutritional counseling
- involvement in community support groups
- activities to improve cognitive impairments, such as difficulties with concentration, attention, memory, and poor judgment
- education regarding the disease and disease process
- goal setting (short- and long-term) involving the individual and family members