

Core Exercises for Stroke Patients to Improve Stability

1. Trunk Rotation (Twists)

Begin this seated core exercise by placing your right hand on the outside of your left thigh. With your back straight, use your arm to help twist your torso to the left.

If you can't move your right hand, then you can use your left hand to assist it. Be sure to keep your spine straight and don't twist to the point of pain.

Return to centre and complete this trunk rotation 10 times.

2. Lateral Trunk Flexion (Oblique Crunches)

From a seated position, dip your left shoulder down towards your left hip. Then, return to an upright position by focusing on using your core to pull yourself up.

If you can't fully complete this exercise yet, then you can use your arm to push yourself back up. Repeat this seated core exercise on each side 10 times.

3. Forward Punches

For this seated core exercise, clasp your hands together and then punch forward. Use your trunk to lean forward while keeping your arms parallel to the floor.

Go as far forward as you safely can without falling. Then, use your back muscles to come back up. You should really feel this in your core. Repeat 10 times. If you feel any pain in your back, stop immediately.

4. Lateral Punch

From a seated position, interlace your fingers and extend arms in front of you with your elbows straight. Then, lean to the right and "punch" the air. Return to center and repeat again for a total of 15 repetitions.

Mat Exercises for Stroke Patients

The following core exercises will be done from a lying position either on a yoga mat or physical therapy table.

These trunk control exercises are more advanced, so try them once you have mastered the exercises above.

5. Leg Rotation

Lie back on a mat with your knees bent at 90 degrees and feet flat on the floor. Then, let your knees fall to the right and twist your trunk to help your legs lower. Then, lift your knees back up and repeat on the other side. Complete 20 repetitions.

6. Leg Raise

Lie on your mat with your knees bent at 90 degrees and feet flat on the floor. Extend your affected leg so that your knee is straight. Then, lift your leg up as far as you safely can, and then bring it back down. Repeat 10 on each side.

7. Bridges

Lie on your back with both knees bent at 90 degrees. Then use your core to scoop your glutes up, making sure not to sway to either side. Then, release your body back down and repeat 10 times.

Advanced Trunk Control Exercises for Stroke Patients

The following core exercises are considered advanced. If you cannot accomplish these movements yet, do not worry. You can get there with time and practice. Start with the earlier exercises and work your way up to these advanced mat exercises as you continue to improve.

8. Crunch

For this movement, do not pull on your head. Instead, lift as high up as you can go using your core muscles.

While lying on your back with your knees bent at 90 degrees, place your hands on your thighs. Then, lift your core up and slide your hands up to your knees, or as high as you can safely go. Then, release back down. Try to complete 30 crunches.

9. Knee to Chest

From a comfortable position on back, hug your knees into your chest. Then, hold on to your left leg with your left arm and then extend your right leg onto the floor. This is your starting position.

From your starting position, bring your right leg back into your chest. Try not to use your leg muscles to achieve this movement. Focus specifically on engaging your core and using your core muscles to lift your leg up.

Once your leg is back in your chest, give your core muscles a good squeeze, then release your leg back down. Perform 10 repetitions with each leg.

10. Toe Taps

While lying on your mat, assume tabletop position by lifting your legs with your knees at a 90-degree angle. Your shins should be parallel to the floor and your core should be fully engaged.

Then, from this tabletop position, bring your left leg down and gently tap the floor with your left foot. Then, bring your leg back up by using your core muscles. Maintain a 90-degree bend in your knee the entire time.

Repeat on the other leg, all while keeping your core as tight as possible. This completes one set. Perform 10 sets total.