

What is circuit training?

Circuit training is a form of training that uses repetitive exercises based on real-life activities. Exercises are performed in a 'circuit' of workstations or as a series of individual movements. Circuit training exercises are used to improve physical abilities such as balance, strength, mobility or coordination. Circuit training can be done in small groups or one-to-one.

Why use circuit training after a stroke?

It is common to need rehabilitation after a stroke. Circuit training can be used as well as, or instead of, traditional rehabilitation to improve physical abilities. Circuit training can be used at all stages of stroke recovery – from the acute phase (approximately 1 month after the stroke) through to the chronic phase (6 or more months post-stroke). Your rehabilitation specialist can choose activities that suit your stage of recovery and rehabilitation goals. Activities can be made more or less difficult, depending on your ability. Furthermore, circuit training can be done in groups, which can benefit motivation and social interactions.

Is circuit training effective after a stroke?

Current research shows that circuit training is at least as effective as traditional rehabilitation for improving most physical abilities. In fact, many studies show that circuit training is more effective than regular rehabilitation for some outcomes. Circuit training is also shown to be as effective as traditional rehabilitation methods for improving emotional wellbeing, quality of life and cognitive function.

Are there different kinds of circuit training?

Circuit training can be used to improve different physical skills such as mobility, balance, and function (i.e. use) of the arms and legs. Different exercises can be chosen by the rehabilitation clinician to suit the patient's rehabilitation needs. Circuit training can be done individually or in a small group. The format of circuit training will be determined by the rehabilitation centre.

Are there risks or side effects?

If you are medically cleared to participate in physical rehabilitation after your stroke, there are no specific risks or side effects associated with circuit training. It is very important that the circuit training program be developed by a qualified professional to suit the person's rehabilitation goals and level of ability. High quality studies have shown that circuit training is not associated with a higher risk of falls than other forms of rehabilitation.

Who provides circuit training?

Circuit training is often provided by physiotherapists, but can also be provided by occupational therapists, kinesiologists, or other qualified professionals. Group circuit training programs may have more than one therapist or therapy assistant, according to the number of participants. Circuit training can be provided in inpatient or outpatient settings such as acute care hospitals and rehabilitation centers.

How much does it cost?

The cost of circuit training depends on public health or insurance policies. In Canada, costs are covered if you are receiving care in a rehabilitation

setting that offers this form of treatment. If you are receiving private rehabilitation, it is important to verify that your insurance covers circuit training.

How long does it take?

In the studies reviewed, circuit training was provided for 3 to 6 weeks (most commonly 4 weeks duration). Circuit training was provided for approximately 30-60 minutes per session, and sessions were provided 3 to 5 times per week. In real life rehabilitation settings, the frequency and duration of circuit training may vary from these timeframes. Sessions are often shorter and more frequent in the early stages of stroke recovery (i.e. 1-6 months post-stroke). Sessions can be affected by the individual's wellness, and their ability to tolerate exercise. Circuit training may end when the person reaches their rehabilitation goals (e.g. being able to return home safely). Other factors such as organisation of care or individual medical restrictions can also affect the duration of treatment.

Is circuit training for me?

Circuit training is a feasible form of rehabilitation to help recover and improve physical ability after a stroke. Speak with your rehabilitation specialists to decide if circuit training is suitable for you.