

The role of Physical Therapy in the management of West Nile virus

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Topics to cover

- ↳ Role of the physical therapist
- ↳ Role of the "patient"
- ↳ Exercise, exercise, exercise
- ↳ Equipment
- ↳ The long haul

Role of the physical therapist

- ↳ Overview
 - ↳ Evaluate your needs at various stages of recovery
 - ↳ Recommend equipment that will make everyday activities, such as transfers, walking, etc., easier and less energy consuming
 - ↳ Prescribe activities and exercises that are appropriate for your level of recovery
 - ↳ Provide skilled therapy such as gait (walking) training, balance training
 - ↳ Develop & implement a customized exercise program & adjust as needed throughout recovery

↳ Evaluation

- ↳ Strength
- ↳ Range of motion
- ↳ Sensation, reflexes
- ↳ General mobility (bed, transfers, floor)
- ↳ Walking ability
- ↳ Balance

↳ Based on the evaluation, the PT will determine:

- ↳ If services are needed at the time of the evaluation
- ↳ What the appropriate frequency of services should be
- ↳ What the skilled interventions will focus on
- ↳ Exercise will most likely be a very important part of what the therapist recommends.
- ↳ It is very important to keep doing the exercises to see progress (more on this topic later).

- ↳ It is important to understand that there may be times when you are working on your own or with your family and not one-on-one with a therapist.
- ↳ Insurance benefits will likely need to be considered in the long term planning and utilization of therapy services.

Role of the patient

- ↳ Your job is to stick with the program, even when it does not seem like there is much evidence of progress.
- ↳ Remember that your recovery is a journey and that everyone's journey is different.
- ↳ Take personal responsibility for your recovery! It is not possible for your therapist, your family, your doctor, or anyone else to do this for you. They can support and encourage you, but it is YOUR challenge and thus YOUR satisfaction when you see the results of your hard work!
- ↳ Communicate openly and regularly with your therapist about how things are going so that appropriate changes can be made to the therapy plan.

Exercise, exercise, exercise

- ↳ Exercise is very important to your recovery. However, it is easy to overdo it!
- ↳ There will be some trial and error involved in coming up with a good exercise plan.
- ↳ There are several key things to consider with exercise, including:
 - ↳ Fatigue
 - ↳ You should avoid fatigue with exercise. There is NO benefit to be gained by attempting to work through fatigue. "No pain, no gain" is NOT TRUE!!!
 - ↳ If you experience delayed onset muscle soreness, you have overworked the affected muscle or muscle group.
 - ↳ Aim for low load (i.e. low weights, probably no weights) and low repetitions for weak muscles.
 - ↳ Only consider adding weight when muscles are stronger.
 - ↳ Attempt to work in *functional* positions as much as possible.
- ↳ Vary your exercise routine to work the muscles in different ways and to keep your interest high.
- ↳ Include aerobic activity as well as strengthening.

- ↳ There are many good options for exercise including:
 - ↳ Pool
 - ↳ Weights, Theraband®
 - ↳ Exercise bike
 - ↳ Treadmill
 - ↳ Walking indoors or outdoors

- ↳ Remember to make time for stretching in your routine.
- ↳ Stretching can be very helpful if you are bothered by spasms and is essential to maintain range of motion in the ankles.

Equipment

- ↳ There is a multitude of excellent equipment available to help make your recovery easier.
- ↳ **USE** the equipment! It is not a sign of failure to use equipment. It is a sign of **GOOD SENSE!** Pieces of equipment are just tools. Tools make jobs easier and more efficient.
- ↳ Underlying principle in the use of equipment:
 - ↳ In order to strengthen muscles in the correct way (a functional way) you need to get as close to normal movement as possible. Equipment is often what allows you to achieve that normal movement. Often failure to use the proper equipment delays or prevents eventual strengthening.
- ↳ An ankle brace (AFO – ankle foot orthosis) may be an important tool in your recovery.
- ↳ Using the brace **DOES NOT MAKE YOU WEAK!** It has the potential to help you get stronger...IF it is the right kind of brace.

- ↳ Other pieces of equipment you might use include:
 - ↳ Wheelchair (manual or power)
 - ↳ Transfer aides (sliding board, lifts)
 - ↳ Walker (standard, rolling, 4-wheeled)
 - ↳ Cane or canes (various models available)
 - ↳ Crutches (various models available)

The long haul

- ✧ Recovery rates vary for each person who has WNV.
- ✧ There may be times when you make rapid progress and times when the progress is slower.
- ✧ The bottom line hang in there!
- ✧ Energy conservation is critical in the management of WNV.
- ✧ Each day you have a limited number of energy “chips” to spend on things you want and/or need to do.
- ✧ Choose those activities wisely to help avoid frustration and unnecessary fatigue.
- ✧ Utilize the support of others who want to help you.
- ✧ Give yourself permission to have good days and bad.
- ✧ Continue to set goals for yourself and work toward those goals.
- ✧ Plan on some activity on most days, more on the days when you feel good.
- ✧ Make sure to “spend” some of your chips on things that are meaningful and enjoyable to you. We all need to have a little fun now and then!

Questions?