**TEXT**

**REHABILITATION**



Rehabilitation is **care that can help you get back, keep, or improve abilities that you need for daily life**. These abilities may be physical, mental, and/or cognitive (thinking and learning). You may have lost them because of a disease or injury, or as a side effect from a medical treatment. Rehabilitation can improve your daily life and functioning.

Anyone may need rehabilitation at some point in their lives, whether they have experienced an injury, disease, illness, or because their functioning has declined with age.

Globally, 1 in 3 people today are estimated to be living with a health condition that would benefit from rehabilitation. This need is predicted to increase in the coming years due to changes in the health and characteristics of the population. For example, people are living longer but with more chronic disease and disability. Emergencies, including conflicts, disasters and outbreaks can all create surges in rehabilitation needs. Globally, many people are living with mid- and long-term consequences of COVID-19 and may be in need of rehabilitation to support their recovery from the disease.

Rehabilitation is a concept that is widely discussed globally. This is by no means unexpected since over a billion people live with a form of disability, accounting for over 15% of the world population. Furthermore, according to a recent report, 2.41 billion individuals worldwide live with the conditions that impact their functions in daily life and would benefit from rehabilitation services, which equates to 1 in 3 individuals requiring rehabilitation services throughout the course of their illness or injury.

The proportion of the worldwide population over 60 will double in the next 30 years, the majority of whom will live with [chronic diseases](https://www.physio-pedia.com/Chronic_Disease), particularly [non-communicable diseases](https://www.physio-pedia.com/Non-Communicable_Diseases). These changing health and demographic trends are contributing to rapid global increases in the number of people experiencing decline in functioning, resulting in enormous unmet rehabilitation needs. Much of these unmet needs are concentrated amongst the poorest and most vulnerable populations in low- and middle-income countries and conflict-affected settings, which are often ill-equipped to cope with these increasing needs for rehabilitation services.

* Rehabilitation is an essential part of universal health coverage along with promotion of good health, prevention of disease, treatment and palliative care.
* Rehabilitation helps a child, adult or older person to be as independent as possible in everyday activities and enables participation in education, work, recreation and meaningful life roles such as taking care of family.
* Globally, an estimated 2.4 billion people are currently living with a health condition that may benefit from rehabilitation.
* The need for rehabilitation worldwide is predicted to increase due to changes in the health and characteristics of the population. For example, people are living longer, but with more chronic disease and disability.
* Currently, the need for rehabilitation is largely unmet. In some low- and middle-income countries, more than 50% of people do not receive the rehabilitation services they require. Emergencies including conflicts, disasters and outbreaks create enormous surges in rehabilitation needs while also disrupting rehabilitation services.
* Rehabilitation is an important part of universal health coverage and is a key strategy for achieving Sustainable Development Goal 3 – “Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages”.

Overview

Rehabilitation is defined as “a set of interventions designed to optimize functioning and reduce disability in individuals with health conditions in interaction with their environment”.

Put simply, rehabilitation helps a child, adult or older person to be as independent as possible in everyday activities and enables participation in education, work, recreation and meaningful life roles such as taking care of family. It does so by working with the person and their family to address underlying health conditions and their symptoms, modifying their environment to better suit their needs, using assistive products, educating to strengthen self-management, and adapting tasks so that they can be performed more safely and independently. Together, these strategies can help an individual; overcome difficulties with thinking, seeing, hearing, communicating, eating or moving around.

Anybody may need rehabilitation at some point in their lives, following an injury, surgery, disease or illness, or because their functioning has declined with age.

Some examples of rehabilitation include:

* speech and language training to improve a person’s communication after a brain injury;
* physical exercise training to improve muscle strength, voluntary movements and balance in persons with stroke or Parkinson disease;
* modifying an older person’s home environment to improve their safety and independence at home and to reduce their risk of falls;
* educating a person with heart disease on how to exercise safely;
* preparing a person with an amputation to be able to use a prosthetic and making, fitting and refitting the prosthesis;
* positioning and splinting techniques to assist with skin healing, reduce swelling, and to regain movement after burn surgery;
* prescribing medicine to reduce spasticity for a child with cerebral palsy;
* psychological therapies for a person with emotional distress following a spinal cord injury;
* Social skills training for persons with schizophrenia, autism spectrum disorders or disorders of intellectual disability.
* training a person with vision loss in the use of a white cane; and
* working with a patient in intensive care to improve their breathing, prevent complications and speed their recovery after critical illness

Rehabilitation is highly person-centred, meaning that the interventions selected for each individual are targeted to their goals and preferences. Rehabilitation can be provided in many different places, such as inpatient or outpatient hospital settings, outpatient physio- or occupational therapy practices, and community settings such as an individual’s home, a school or a workplace.

The rehabilitation workforce is made up of different health workers, including but not limited to physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists and audiologists, orthotists and prosthetists, clinical psychologists, physical medicine and rehabilitation doctors, and rehabilitation nurses. Many other health workers, such as general practitioners, surgeons, and community health workers may also play an important role in a person’s rehabilitation.

The benefits of rehabilitation

Rehabilitation can reduce the impact of a broad range of health conditions, including diseases (acute or chronic), illnesses or injuries. It complements other health interventions, such as medical and surgical interventions, helping to facilitate recovery and achieve the best outcome possible. In addition, rehabilitation can help to prevent, reduce or manage complications associated with many health conditions, such as in the context of spinal cord injury, stroke, or fractures.

Rehabilitation helps to minimize or slow down the disabling effects of chronic health conditions, such as cardiovascular disease, cancer and diabetes by equipping people with self-management strategies and the assistive products they require, or by addressing pain or other complications. As such, it contributes to healthy ageing.

Rehabilitation is an investment, with cost benefits for both the individuals and society. It can help to avoid costly hospitalization, reduce hospital length of stay, and prevent re-admissions. As rehabilitation also enables individuals to engage in or return to work and employment, or to remain independent at home, it minimizes the need for financial or caregiver support.

Rehabilitation is an important part of universal health coverage and is a key strategy for achieving Sustainable Development Goal 3 – “Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages”.

In many parts of the world, this increasing need for rehabilitation is going largely unmet. More than half of people living in some low- and middle-income countries who require rehabilitation services do not receive them.

Global rehabilitation needs continue to be unmet due to multiple factors, including:

* lack of prioritization, funding, policies, and plans for rehabilitation at a national level;
* lack of available rehabilitation services outside urban areas, and long waiting times;
* high out-of-pocket expenses and non-existent or inadequate means of funding;
* lack of trained rehabilitation professionals, with less than 10 skilled practitioners per 1 million population in many low- and middle-income settings;
* lack of resources, including assistive technology, equipment, and consumables;
* the need for more research and data on rehabilitation; and
* ineffective and under-utilized referral pathways to rehabilitation.