

Full Body Exercises

FOR BRAIN INJURY PATIENTS

Recovery is a journey full of hard work, persistence, and positivity. If you're a brain injury survivor looking to improve movement, you're in the right place. Here, we provide 20 exercises from our licensed therapists, designed to improve leg, core, arm, shoulder, and hand mobility.

Flint Rehab is here to support and guide you during your journey to recovery.

Let's get to it.

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Barbara Brewer, COTA

Leg Exercises

Lili Molano, DPT believes TBI recovery comes from hard work and perseverance—and having fun along the way. Here are five exercises recommended by Lili to help regain muscles and improve coordination in your legs.



1 HIP FLEXION WITH HOLD

Use your hands to lift your affected leg up into your chest. Hold in place for a second before slowly letting it back down.

Repeat on the other leg while keeping your back straight and your core tight.



2 KNEE EXTENSION

From a seated position, extend your left leg out in front of you parallel to the floor. Avoid locking your knee.



Slowly bring your foot back down to the floor. This will feel like a kicking motion.

Repeat, alternating back and forth between your right and left legs.



3 HIP EXTERNAL / INTERNAL ROTATION

For this exercise, you can place a towel underneath your affected foot to help make it easier.

From a seated position, use your hands to assist your affected leg and slide your foot towards your midline.

Then, push your leg outwards. You can use your hands for assistance if necessary.

4 SEATED MARCHING

From a seated position, lift your affected leg up into your chest. Then place it back onto the floor.



Keep your back straight and maintain a controlled movement.

Repeat on the other leg, alternating back and forth.





5 HIP ADDUCTIONS

From a seated position, lift your affected leg slightly off the floor.

Your leg should remain bent at 90 degrees, while your foot hovers over the floor.



Kick your leg outward like you're kicking a ball to the side. Then, kick your leg inward toward your midline.

Core Exercises

Cassi Church, DPT, is a doctor of physical therapy. Cassi joined FlintFit to share her knowledge with the TBI community. To rebuild core strength and coordination following a TBI, here are five of Cassi's favorite core exercises.



1 TOE TAPS

While lying on your back, lift your legs up, bending your knees at a 90 degree angle. Your core should be fully engaged. This is your starting position. Bring your left leg down and gently tap the floor with your foot.

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 while keeping your core as tight as possible.



2 FORWARD PUNCHES

Clasp your hands together, then punch forward while keeping your arms parallel to the floor.



Use your back muscles to come back up. You should feel this in your core.

Repeat, but stop immediately if you feel any pain in your back.





3 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, use your arm to push yourself back up.

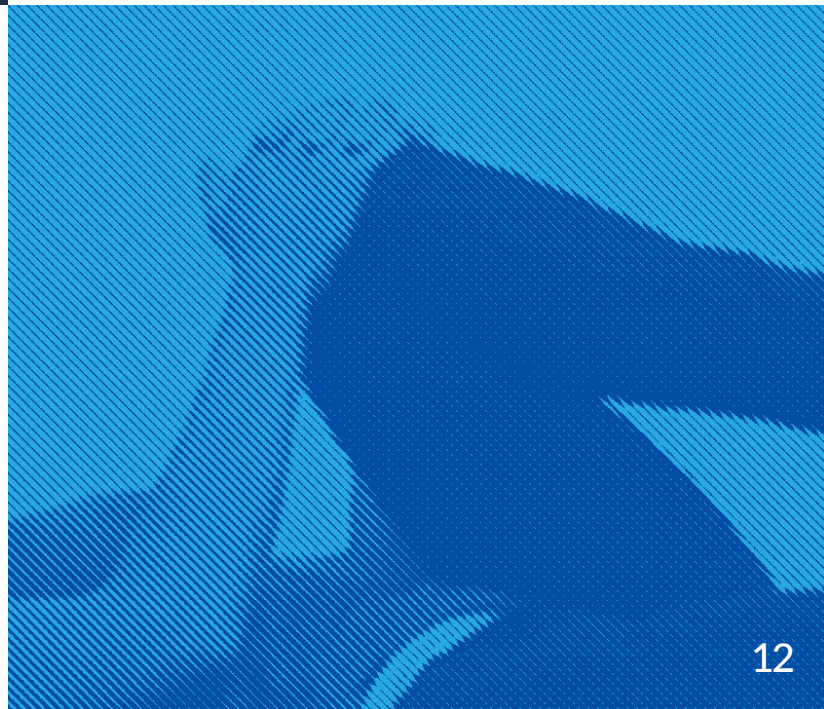
4 KNEE TO CHEST

From a comfortable lying position, hug your knees into your chest. Hold onto your left leg with your left arm and extend your right leg to the floor. This is your starting position.



From here, 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, 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.





5 TRUNK ROTATION (TWISTS)

From a seated position, place 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, use your left hand to assist it. Be sure to keep your spine straight and don't twist to the point of pain.



Aim to engage your core. Repeat this motion, alternating between sides each time.

Arm and Shoulder Exercises

Barbara Brewer, COTA, is a TBI guru, having practiced occupational therapy for over 30 years. She believes in a holistic approach to recovery. Barbara recommends the following five exercises to help gain back coordination after a TBI.



1 STRAIGHT PUSH

Place a water bottle on the table away from you at arm's length. Interlace your fingers and rest your hand and forearm on the table. Stretch and reach your arm across the table to tap the water bottle.

If you can, try pushing the bottle a little farther away from you. Then pull your arms back down in front of you and rest your shoulders down. Put the same attention and focus into pulling your arms back in as you do pushing them out.



2 PUSHING MOVEMENT

Place a water bottle on the left side of the table within your range of motion.



Hook your wrist on the outside of the bottle and use your arm to push the bottle across the table.

Perform the same movement to push the bottle back.





3 WEIGHTED BICEP CURL

Hold a water bottle in your affected hand and hang your arm down by your side. While keeping your elbow glued to your side, bring the bottle up to your shoulder.

Bring it back down just as slowly. You are working your tricep when you bring your arm down, and your bicep when you bring it up.



Both muscles need equal amounts of attention.

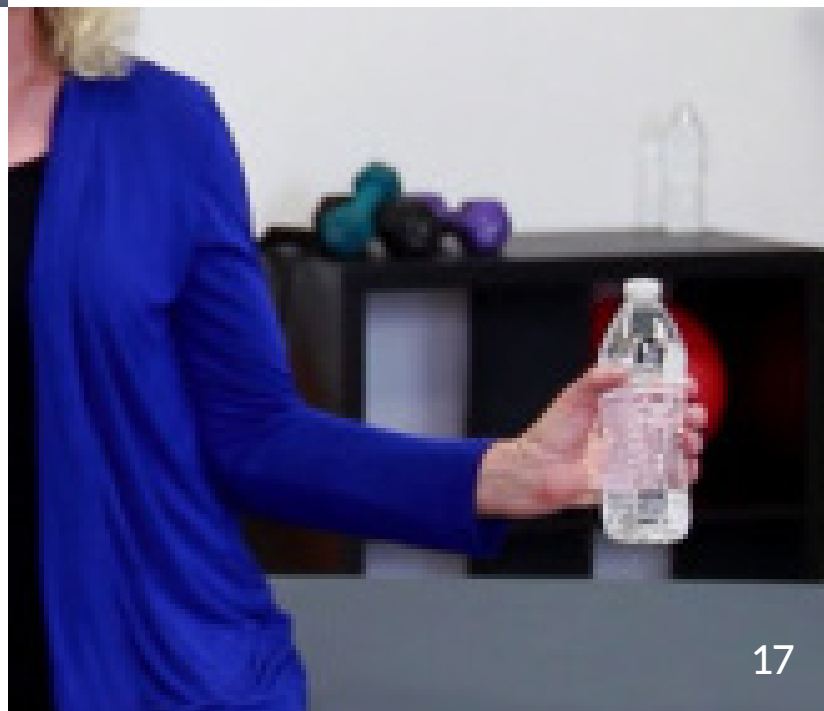
4 OPEN ARM MOVEMENT

Sit comfortably and hold a water bottle with your affected hand. If it's too heavy, try the exercise with no weight and work up from there.



Keep your elbows glued to your sides at all times during this exercise. With your arms bent at 90 degrees, open your arms up so that your forearms come out to your sides.

Really focus on squeezing your shoulder blades together when your arms are opened up the widest. Then, move your arms back to center.





5 SIDE ARM RAISE

While sitting on the edge of your bed or couch, hold a water bottle in your affected hand and place your arm out to your side.

Lift the water bottle up while keeping your arm straight. Make sure that the entire movement is happening in your arm.



Try not to let your shoulder hike up.

Hand Exercises

Barbara Brewer understands the frustration survivors of TBI with decreased hand function can feel during recovery. Barbara recommends five simple exercises to help gain back dexterity.



Repeat back and forth.
Palm up, palm down.

1 PALM UP AND DOWN

Place your hand on a table top with your palm facing up. Use your non-affected hand to help flip your palm down.



2 WRIST BEND MOVEMENT

While keeping your elbow on the table, use your non-affected hand to stretch your affected hand at the wrist.



Stretch backward.
Then stretch forward.

Slowly repeat the movement.





3 GRIP AND RELEASE

Place a pen to the side of the table and then grip it with your affected fingers.

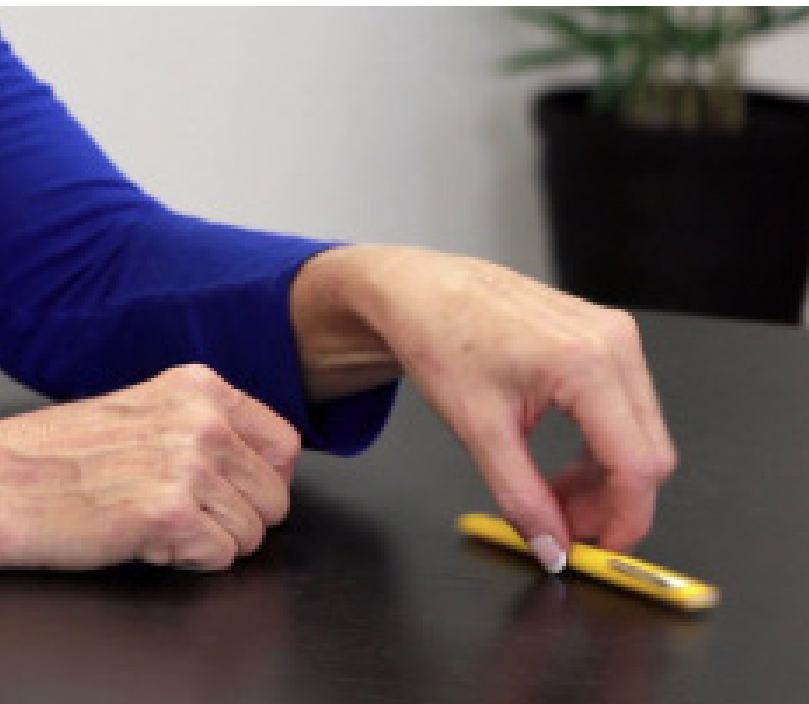
Slide the pen across the table and release. Make sure you grip the pen gently, using as little force as necessary to move it.



Repeat back and forth across the table.

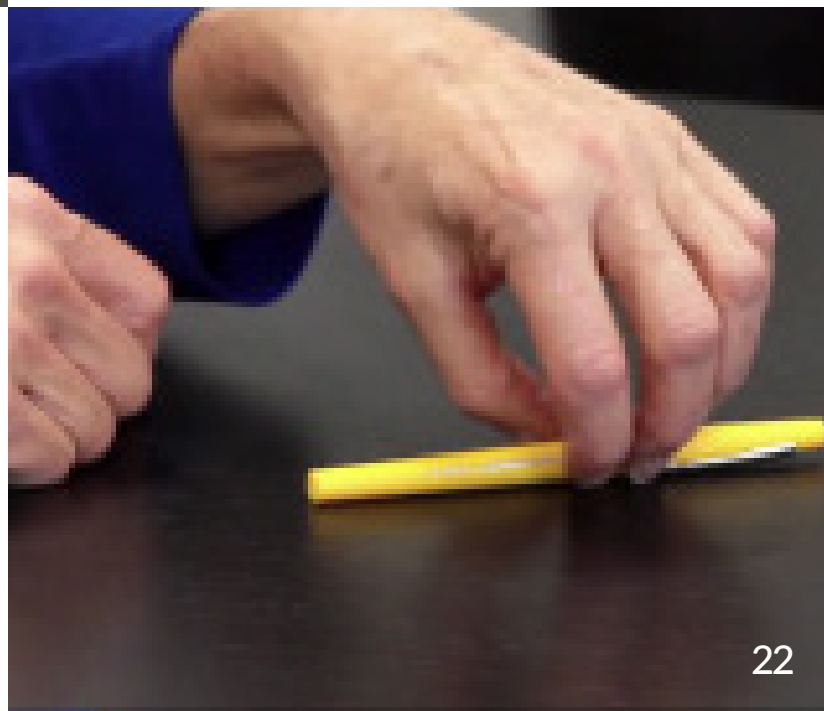
4 PEN SPIN

Place the pen on the table and use your thumb and fingers to spin it. Try not to use your shoulder during this movement.



You want to isolate your thumb and fingers. Aim for speed during this exercise.

Spin the pen as fast as you can for 15 seconds.





5 FINGER CURL

Bend your affected arm and place your elbow on the table.

Make little "O's" with your fingers by bringing the tip of your index finger to the tip of your thumb. Pinch, and release.



Repeat with your middle, ring, and pinkie finger. Pinch, and release.



Those are all the exercises! Want to improve mobility even faster?

FitMi Home Therapy Program can help. FitMi harnesses the power of neuroplasticity and repetition to improve your mobility. The more you practice, the more your brain has the stimulation it needs to create new neural pathways.



"Every year we search for a tool to help our son Nicholas in his recovery from the traumatic brain injury.

The Flint Rehab FitMi is the best tool we have found in the 13 years we've been caring for our son!

Not only is it helping him with movements but it is stimulating his brain! We are very happy and thankful for the FitMi!"

—

Melissa, caregiver

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