EVIDENCE IN PLAIN LANGUAGE

World Stroke Day
29 October 2026

Can Virtual Reality be useful for stroke rehabilitation?

Evidence in numbers



190 trials, with **7188** stroke survivors, across **34** countries

Key Messages

The study compared **the effects** of **VR versus alternative treatment,** or **no treatment** on **stroke recovery.**

The study measured **arm function** and **outcomes** like **walking speed,** and **independence** in **managing daily activities.**

VR may **work as well as,** or **slightly better** than**, conventional therapy.**

VR may **improve arm** and **hand function** and **support daily activities** when added to **standard rehabilitation therapy.**

VR may be **most beneficial** when **people spend more time** using it.

Authors' conclusions

- When **virtual reality (VR)** was **added** to **usual care,** it **increased** the **amount of therapy time,** and improved **survivors' ability** to **move their arm.**
- **VR improved gait speed** and **balance**, while the effect on **walking speed** or improving **quality of life** is yet to be determined.
- **VR** is **safe** with **few participants** reporting **minor adverse events** like **pain, headaches,** or **temporary dizziness.**
- The **study populations** were **relatively young,** and **older people** were **underrepresented** in the included studies.

Laver KE, Lange B, George S, Deutsch JE, Saposnik G, Chapman M, Crotty M. Virtual reality for stroke rehabilitation. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2025, Issue 6. Art. No.: CD008349. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD008349.pub5. Accessed 20 October 2026.

About Cochrane South Africa

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