

EXERCISING WITH ANEMIA



If you have chronic anemia, exercise may leave you easily fatigued and short of breath. Because your blood is iron deficient and carries less oxygen to working muscles, moderate physical activity can feel significantly more strenuous. However, research suggests that regular exercise can markedly improve your endurance and overall fitness level. The key to maximizing the benefits of exercise is to follow a well-designed program that you can stick to over the long-term.

Getting Started

- Talk with your health care practitioner before starting an exercise program and ask for specific programming recommendations.
- Take all medications as recommended by your physician.
- The primary goal of your program is to improve endurance. Choose activities that you enjoy and will do on a regular basis.
- If your fitness level is low, start with shorter sessions (10 to 15 minutes) and gradually add five minutes to your workouts every two to four weeks. Ideally, you should build up to 30 to 60 minutes, at least three to four days per week.
- At least two days per week, follow a strength-training program with one to three sets of exercises for the major muscle groups, with 10 to 15 repetitions.
- Take frequent breaks during activity if needed. Your workouts should be comfortable and not strained.

Exercise Cautions

- Do not exercise if resting blood pressure is greater than 180/110 mmHg.
- Stop exercising immediately if you experience chest pain or angina. Contact your physician if you experience chest pain, labored breathing or extreme fatigue.
- High-intensity exercise and dehydration may increase the risk of sickle cell crisis. Closely monitor your intensity level and stay within your target heart-rate zone.

Your exercise program should be designed to maximize the benefits with the fewest risks of aggravating your health or physical condition. Consider contacting a certified health and fitness professional* who can work with you and your health care provider to establish realistic goals and design a safe and effective program that addresses your specific needs.

IN THE SERIES:

- > Cardiovascular Diseases
- > Pulmonary Diseases
- > Metabolic Diseases
- > Immunological/ Hematological Disorders
- > Orthopedic Diseases and Disabilities
- > Neuromuscular Disorders

*If your health care provider has not cleared you for independent physical activity and would like you to be monitored in a hospital setting or a medical fitness facility, you should exercise only under the supervision of a certified professional. The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) has two groups of certified fitness professionals that could meet your needs. The ACSM Certified Clinical Exercise Specialist (CES) is certified to support those with heart disease, diabetes and lung disease. The ACSM Registered Clinical Exercise Physiologist (RCEP) is qualified to support patients with a wide range of health challenges. You may locate all ACSM-certified fitness professionals by using the ProFinder at www.acsm.org.

For more information, visit www.exerciseismedicine.org or e-mail eim@acsm.org.

Support for the Exercise is Medicine® Global Initiative is Provided By:

