

EXERCISING

WITH

ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION



Regular physical activity is good therapy for both depression and anxiety, and it will also help improve your mood and self-esteem. Exercise will also help you reduce your stress, sleep better, and feel more energized. 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 provider about integrating regular exercise into your treatment plan.
- Take all medications as recommended by your physician.
- The primary goal of your program is to find activities that you enjoy and will do on a regular basis. Choose environments that are comfortable and familiar to you and avoid situations that increase anxiety.
- If your fitness level is low, start with shorter sessions (even 5 to 10 minutes) and gradually build up to 20 to 60 minutes of aerobic activity, at least four or more 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.
- Mind-body activities, such as yoga and tai chi, are particularly effective for reducing anxiety and enhancing relaxation.

Exercise Cautions

- If you take medication, be aware of how it might affect your response to exercise. For example, some anti-psychotic medications can cause dehydration or gait disturbances, while certain antidepressants can cause fatigue, dizziness and weight gain.
- If you have been inactive, consider joining structured, supervised program to help develop a routine that you will continue to do on a regular basis.

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.

*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.

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