

EXERCISING WITH EPILEPSY



Don't let fear of having a seizure may keep you from enjoying the benefits of regular physical activity. Seizures rarely occur during exercise; in fact, regular exercise inhibits seizure activity! Appropriate exercise can also help you maintain a healthy body weight, boost immunity, reduce 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 neurologist about whether or not you are sufficiently stable to start doing regular exercise.
- Take all medications as recommended by your physician.
- The primary goal of your program is to improve your overall fitness level by choosing activities that you enjoy and will do on a regular basis.
- Choose large-muscle activities, such as walking, biking, rowing or jogging.
- If your fitness level is low, start with shorter sessions (10 to 15 minutes) and gradually build up to 30 minutes of aerobic activity, five 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

- Avoid boxing, swimming under water, and soccer (because of heading). Activities requiring special monitoring include swimming and anything from heights, such as rock climbing or horseback riding.
- Pay attention to the precipitating factors of your seizures and schedule your exercise accordingly. If you take medication, be aware of how it might affect your response to exercise.

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.

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