

EXERCISING

WITH

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS



Regular physical activity can help ease the pain and symptoms of multiple sclerosis, and has been shown to increase muscle strength and endurance, enhance mobility and reduce the risk of falling. The key to maximizing the benefits of exercise is to not overdo it and to follow a well-designed program that accommodates your individual needs and concerns.

Getting Started

- Talk with your health care provider before starting an exercise program and ask for specific programming recommendations.
- Take all medications as recommended by your physician.
- The goals of your program should be to maintain and, if possible, improve your current level of joint flexibility, muscular strength and endurance, and cardiorespiratory endurance.
- Choose low-impact activities such as swimming and recumbent cycling. Walking is a good choice if you are not experiencing problems with your gait or balance. Yoga and tai chi also provide additional mind-body benefits.
- Start slowly and gradually progress the intensity and duration of your workouts. Aim to exercise aerobically at least 30 minutes, three times per week and strength train on alternate days twice per week. Stretching exercises to improve your range of motion should be done before every workout.
- Be prepared to adjust your workouts according to the progression or recession of your symptoms. Monitor your response to exercise; if you feel fatigued rather than energized, you may be overdoing it.

Exercise Cautions

- Avoid exercising in high temperatures and during the hottest part of the day (typically from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.). Drink cool fluids before, during and after your exercise session.
- Avoid high-impact activities such as running and situations that may increase your risk of falling.
- Never exercise to the point of pain—if something hurts, don't do it.

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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