

Being Active

When You Have HIV/AIDS

Exercise
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Do you want to feel better, move better and sleep better? Experts now say that any physical activity counts toward better health – even just a few minutes!

Staying active is important for people living with human immunodeficiency virus, or HIV. A well-designed physical activity program can help make your HIV treatment more effective and give you more energy. There is no evidence that regular moderate exercise suppresses the immune system. Strength training is very important for people with HIV because it can help slow down the loss of muscle or bone sometimes caused by the virus or HIV medications.

Certain antiretroviral (ART) drugs increase your risk of developing health conditions such as unhealthy cholesterol, changes in body fat (how much and where it sits), type 2 diabetes, heart problems or weak bones. Both aerobic activity and strength training improve these health problems. If you are an adult with HIV who is responding well to treatment, being active is both safe and essential.

Getting Started

Keep It Simple

Sit less and move around more! Walk to the mailbox. Walk the dog. Dance in the kitchen. Take the stairs. Find opportunities to move throughout the day. It all adds up.



Be Active with a Friend

Do activities that you enjoy and find an activity buddy at home or work. Those who exercise with a friend tend to stick with it longer than those who go it alone.



Motivation

Use an activity tracker or smart phone app to measure your progress and stay motivated. Count your steps daily for the first week. Slowly build up to 7,000-9,000 steps/day.



HIV Tips and Cautions

Talk to your health care provider before getting active, especially if you are having HIV-related symptoms or side-effects from ARTs. Will any medications you are taking affect how you respond to exercise?

Many HIV drugs can cause side effects, including diarrhea, dizziness, headaches, fatigue, fever, muscle aches, nausea and vomiting. Work with your health care team to adjust your activity program.

If you have osteopenia, or weak bones, talk to your provider about weight-bearing or strength training activities that can help.

Aerobic Activity



Aerobic activity increases your heart rate and breathing. Build up to doing at least 150 minutes a week of moderate-intensity activity (like a brisk walk, light bike, water exercise or dancing).

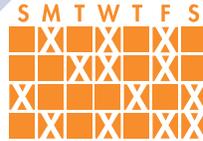
What?

Any rhythmic, continuous activity!



How often?

3-5 days/week



Intensity?

Fairly light to somewhat hard.



How much?

Start with a few minutes. Gradually build up to 30-60 minutes over the day.



Remember: Fit in 5 or 10 minutes here and there. Or go for 20-30 minutes. Be active however and wherever you can. To lose weight, do twice as much activity.

Aerobic Activity Cautions

- Avoid doing lots of vigorous exercise. If you exercise at too high of an intensity, you'll tire out quicker. Very strenuous exercise can affect your immune function and increases your risk of injury or a heart problem.
- Start at a comfortable effort level and increase gradually. Progress may be slow at first due to virus symptoms and drug side effects, but stick with it.
- Total activity time is more important than intensity. Start low and go slow!
- If you have pain for more than 2 hours after activity, go shorter and easier next time.
- Warm up and cool down at an easy pace before and after exercise.

Strength Training



Strength training is especially important to counter some of the effects of HIV infection, for example muscle or bone loss. Plus, strength training can make daily activities like lifting laundry baskets or yardwork easier and safer.

What?

Hand weights, resistance bands, weight machines or your own body, (for example, kitchen counter push-ups or chair squats)



How often?

2-3 days/week
*Rest day in between



How hard?

Start with light effort. Build up to medium effort.



How much?

8-10 repetitions. 1-2 sets (for each major muscle group). Build up to 3 sets.



Remember: Avoid straining or holding your breath when lifting. If you need it, get help from a certified exercise professional. They can teach you the right way to do exercises and how to breathe properly.

Other Types of Physical Activity



Aerobic activity and strength training are at the heart of a program for those with HIV/AIDS. But you may enjoy and benefit from these other options.

Just for Fun

Find ways of being active that are just plain fun. Try pickleball. Dance. Tend your garden. Play outdoors with your kids or grandkids. Find what makes you smile and do it often.



Yoga, Tai Chi and Pilates

All help with balance, flexibility and strength, and are relaxing too!



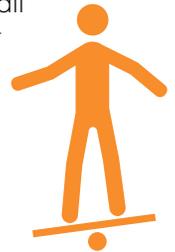
Flexibility Exercises

Stretch your muscles 2-3 days/week. Stretch to the point of feeling tightness. Hold for 10-30 seconds (30-60 seconds for older adults) to improve flexibility, joint range of motion and movement.



Balance Training

Balance exercises may include standing on one foot, walking on a line or using a balance board. Train in an uncluttered area and use a chair or wall for support if needed.



More Help

For more information about exercising with HIV, check out this website:

<http://www.thebody.com/index/dietnut/exercise.html>

Go to www.acsm.org/get-stay-certified/find-a-pro to find **an ACSM certified exercise professional** near you.

Start where you are. Use what you have. **Do what you can.**

How will I get started **this week?** _____
