



Physical activity for your neurological health



This resource talks about how physical activity may affect your neurological health. It should be used along with additional information given to you from your family doctor.

While regular physical activity cannot slow down neurological conditions such as multiple sclerosis or Parkinson's disease, it can help you in other ways. In those with a neurological condition, studies show that physical activity can help:



Improve sleep, mood, and quality of life

Prevent falls by improving muscle strength and decreasing stiffness

Reduce and relieve some of the symptoms that can come with neurological conditions such as multiple sclerosis or Parkinson's disease

Your physical activity can be **enjoyable**, **effective**, and **safe**.



Enjoyable



Some people who have neurological conditions find it hard to get started with physical activity because they feel tired, or they have difficulty with certain movements, or they have difficulty controlling their inner temperature. There are others with similar challenges and overcoming them together can make physical activity more enjoyable. Trying different activities lets you find what works best for you; it's also okay to change what you are doing from time to time.

Effective



Aerobic physical activity can help your mood and quality of life. Strength, balance, and flexibility exercises are very effective for any type of neurological condition, especially when falling is a concern.

Safe



The kind of physical activity you can do safely may be affected by your health conditions, your fitness level, and by your current treatments.

Getting started usually means moving 'little but often' with some light walking or similar types of activity. Gradually increase to a level that makes you feel like you are breathing heavier than normal, so that you can talk but not sing. If you feel especially tired, you can try less intense physical activity for a shorter time, or take a day off and try again the next day. If you are prone to **autonomic dysreflexia** (syndrome of sudden excessively high blood pressure), or have other medical conditions, you should talk with your doctor about the best types of physical activity for you. People with **Parkinson's disease** should avoid high-intensity strength training and use lighter weights with more repetitions instead.

Avoid physical activity and consult your doctor if you experience any of the following symptoms:

- Unusual fatigue or weakness
- Chest pain or an irregular pulse
- Difficulty breathing
- Feeling sick during activity
- Acute pain or injury
- Unexplained dizzy spells

Helpful resources



This Canadian website explains specific recommendations for multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, and spinal cord injury.

<http://www.csep.ca/en/guidelines/physical-activity-guidelines-for-special-populations>

Doctors in the UK have put together a website with informative videos and online pamphlets, including specific advice about physical activity for different neurological conditions.

<http://www.benefitfromactivity.org.uk/why-am-i-doing-this/conditions/neurological-disorders/>

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