

Being Active with Mobility Limitations

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Do you want to feel better, move better and sleep better? Experts now say that any amount of physical activity counts toward better health – even just a few minutes! Despite the mobility limitations that people may face, everyone can find ways to be active and live healthier.

Fortunately, there are many ways that people with mobility restrictions, such as using a wheelchair or living with limb amputation, can adapt exercise to stay physically fit. Being active will improve your strength, energy and coordination.

The benefits of regular physical activity include decreasing your risk for obesity, heart disease, diabetes and depression. For those in wheelchairs, being active can reduce the risk of bladder infections, skin breakdown and breathing problems.



Getting Started

Keep It Simple

Move around more!
Roll to the mailbox.
Walk the dog. Dance in your chair. Find opportunities to move throughout your day. It all adds up.

Talk with Your Doctor

If you have health concerns, talk with your health care provider before you start exercising, especially if you haven't exercised much in the past.

Resources

Check out the list of community-based sport and recreation programs at the end of this handout. You'll be surprised by all the help and kindness around you.

Be Active with Others

Exercising together with friends is more fun and provides social support. Plus, you'll be more likely to stick with it.

To stay safe and injury free:

- Start with light to medium effort.
- Gradually increase your pace and time spent being active. Start low and go slow!
- Warm up and cool down at an easy pace before and after exercise.

Aerobic Activity

Aerobic activity increases your heart rate and breathing. Build up to doing at least 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity, 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity or a combination of both.

What?

Any rhythmic, continuous activity

How often?

Most days, at least 3 to 4 days/week

How hard?

Fairly light to somewhat hard, “can talk but not sing”

How much?

30 to 60 minutes over the day

Remember: Walking, rolling, biking, water exercise and swimming are great. Fit in 5 or 10 minutes here and there. Or go for 20 to 30 minutes. Be active however and wherever you can. To lose weight, do twice as much activity.

Aerobic Activity Tips and Cautions

- Modified sports like adaptive aquatics, soccer, kayaking, rowing and cycling can help you reach your goal. Exercise videos are a great at-home option and many exercises can be performed in a chair.
- If an activity worsens pain, you have done too much. Talk with your health care provider if you have concerns.
- Stay well-hydrated before, during and after activity.

Strength Training

Strength training will help you build and maintain muscle strength, prevent muscle loss and function more independently. Adaptive weightlifting is one way to perform strength training. It’s okay to be creative – you can use everyday objects at home.

What?

Adaptive weight lifting – hand weights, resistance bands or your own body (for example, wall push-ups or chair sit-to-stands).

How often?

2 to 3 days/week
*Rest day in between

How hard?

Start with light effort. Build up to medium or hard effort.

How much?

10 to 15 repetitions to start (for each major muscle group) Build up to 8 to 12 repetitions of challenging effort. Repeat 2 to 4 times.

Remember: Your goal is to improve your ability to do activities of daily living. If you need it, get help from a certified exercise professional. They can teach you the right way to do the exercises and how to breathe properly.

Strength Training Tips and Cautions

- Be mindful of any medical precautions, for example, if you have any restrictions on twisting, range of motion, or how much you should lift.
- Don't hold your breath when you lift. Breathe normally through the exercise.

Other Types of Physical Activity

Aerobic activity and strength training are at the heart of a program for those with mobility limitations. You will also benefit from these other options.

Flexibility

Take a moment to stretch the major muscle groups after activity, holding the stretch 10 to 30 seconds (30 to 60 seconds for older adults), repeating 3 to 4 times. Try chair yoga or adaptive yoga.

Just for Fun

Many recreational activities can be adapted to fit your needs, such as golf, fishing, skiing and sailing. These activities offer the opportunity to connect with other people, continue with hobbies you enjoy and can boost your spirits.

Low Impact

Low impact activities include those that are seated or water-based. Exercises and stretches that focus on improving your range of motion and strength can be easier on your joints and don't get you out of breath.

More Help

Check out these resources:

Community-Based Sport and Recreation Programs: Sport Club Finder, Sports Abilities, Disabled Sports USA, Disabled World, Disabled Athlete Sports Association, Dream Adaptive Recreation, Blaze Sports of America, Challenged Athletes Foundation

Adaptive Equipment Resources: Sports Abilities, Team PossAbilities, Access to Recreation, Top End Handcycle, Freedom Adaptive Systems, Creating Ability, Adaptive Outdoorsman, YMCA, senior centers.

National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability: For more information on specific exercises, visit www.nchpad.org.

Consider contacting a certified exercise professional to work with you and your provider. The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) has Inclusive Fitness trainers who are certified in helping persons with disabilities exercise safely. www.acsm.org/get-stay-certified/find-a-pro.

Physical medicine and rehabilitation physicians (physiatrists) specialize in taking care of patients with mobility restrictions and may be helpful.

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