

Being Active with Inflammatory Bowel Disease

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Do you want to feel better, move better and sleep better? Inactive people who start moving get the biggest bang for their buck. Experts now say that any physical activity counts toward better health – even just a few minutes.

People with digestive problems such as Crohn's, colitis or inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) will benefit from regular physical activity. Being active can lower inflammation, improve immune function and reduce disease activity. Plus physical activity can help you manage your weight, improve bone health, lessen fatigue, reduce depression and boost your mood.



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 your day. It all adds up!

Check Your Health

If you have health worries, talk with your health care provider before you start exercising. Make sure they know all the medications you are taking. If you have muscle or joint problems, ask about doing physical therapy before beginning an exercise program.

Track It

After activity, write down how you feel. Use a sticker or draw a smiley face. Repeated feedback helps you figure out what exercises are best for you and when you're doing too much. Soon you'll look back and see just how quickly your body adjusted to a new and improved you!

Be Active with a Friend

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

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

Crohn's and Colitis Tips and Cautions:

- During a flare-up, modify your activity. For example, you may be able to do yoga or walk/bike at a moderate intensity. Or just get started again when you've got control of your symptoms.
- It's important for those with digestive disorders to stay hydrated, so drink plenty of fluids throughout the day and during exercise.
- If you experience occasional diarrhea, plan ahead. Know where the bathrooms are so you can get there quickly.
- If you have an ostomy you can definitely exercise. Just make sure that the bag is secure with waterproof tape.
- Some medications may impact your ability to exercise, so be sure to discuss your routine with your primary care provider when starting new meds.

Aerobic Activity

Aerobic activity increases your heart rate and breathing. Build up to doing at least 150 minutes/week of moderate-intensity activity (like a brisk walk, light cycling or water exercise), 75 minutes of vigorous activity (like jogging, singles tennis or hiking hills) or a combination of both. You'll improve your stamina and heart health.

What?

Any rhythmic, continuous activity

How often?

3-5 days/week

How hard?

Fairly light to somewhat hard

How much?

Start w/ 5 -10 minutes. Gradually build up to 30-60 total 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.

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 before and after exercise.

IBD Nutrition Fact

Each person with IBD has different food sensitivities and nutrition needs. Ask for a referral to a registered dietitian. They can help you put together a personal food plan. They will take into account your need for certain nutrients, fiber and protein (based on gut inflammation) and whether you also have lactose or gluten intolerance.

Strength Training

Strength training, for example working with weights or resistance bands, makes you stronger and helps your overall health. 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 or hard effort.

How much?

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

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

Explore some of these other options for getting active. The more types of activity you incorporate into your life, the more benefits you'll receive.

Flexibility

Stretch your muscles 2-7 days/week to the point of feeling tightness. Hold for 10 - 30 seconds (30-60 seconds for older adults). For example, stretch your calves or the back of your thighs.

Yoga, Tai Chi, and Pilates

All help with balance, flexibility and strength, and improve mindfulness. This is a great exercise to keep help out on those stressful days!

Take more steps!

Use a smart phone or activity tracker 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.

Just for Fun

Find ways of being active that are just plain fun. Dance to your favorite song. Try yoga or tai chi. Tend your garden. Play with your kids or grandkids. Find what makes you smile and do it often.

More Help

The Crohn's and Colitis Foundation also has tips on nutrition to help balance a dietary plan that supports your activity goals. crohnscolitisfoundation.org

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

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

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