

STARTING TO EXERCISE



People living with a chronic illness often need to make changes to their everyday lives. The examples in this brochure are meant as a guide only. We hope that you find some of these useful.

A FITNESS PROGRAM

Regular exercise (along with a balanced diet) is important to your long term health. Exercise makes your body more efficient and helps prevent health problems, as well as assisting in the maintenance of coordination and balance. Moderate exercise is also thought to strengthen your immune system. Exercise has psychological benefits too, it can help reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression and improve sleep patterns.

You can improve your general health by doing 30 minutes of moderate exercise, like walking, gardening or golf, on most days of the week. Walking three to five times a week (along with other activities, such as housework) provides adequate aerobic exercise.

Your fitness program should combine aerobic exercise for cardiovascular fitness, exercise for muscular strength and endurance, as well as flexibility exercise to maintain range motion and reduce the chance of injury.

STARTING EXERCISING ?

- See your doctor for a check up before starting any exercise program.
- Set your goals and write them down. Goals could be to improve your health, increase your fitness level or just to get into the habit of doing regular exercise.
- Start slowly and build up (let your body get used to it). Before starting a program like yoga, consult a qualified practitioner to design a program for your individual needs.
- Don't do too much because you will increase your risk of injury, fatigue and are more likely to drop out. It is important to do proper warm up and cool down (5-10 minutes for both). You can gain the most benefit from stretching after exercising.

Stop exercising immediately and see your doctor if you experience any of the following:

- Chest Pain.
- Palpitations (fluttering/unusual pounding in your chest).
- Shortness of breath, dizziness.
- Injury.
- Nausea.

Listen to your body. Skip a day or take an easy day if you feel ill or need the rest. You can then gradually work back up to your previous level. It is important not to overdo exercise; your immune system needs adequate rest also.

SET GOALS

When planning your exercise program think about the frequency (how often), the intensity (how hard), the time (how long), and the type of exercise (eg. walking, swimming, cycling). Set goals for your exercise program, and write down your plan.

Keep an exercise log or diary, as seeing completed sessions will encourage you to keep on exercising.

EXERCISE PLANNER

- What is your level of activity now?
- Types of exercise you do regularly are;
- The type of work you do is;
- Types of leisure activities you do are;
- The purpose of this exercise program is;
- The goals you want to achieve from the exercise program are;
- Steps you will take to achieve this;
- Dates you plan to achieve this;
- Long term goals (6-12 months);
- Medium term goals (4-12 weeks);
- Short term (1-4 weeks);
- Daily goals;



SAMPLE WALKING PROGRAM

How often? Plan to walk 3-5 times a week.

How long? Between 22-38 minutes.

This is made up of 5-10 minutes warm up, that is 12- 18 minutes of walking and 5-10 minutes cool-down.

When? Walk before meals or wait an hour or so after eating. Try not to exercise when it is very hot or cold. Cool off for 15-20 minutes before taking a lukewarm shower.

BUILDING ENDURANCE & STRENGTH

To improve endurance, take an extra long, slow walk once a week. To build muscle strength walk up hills or up stairs once a week. It is important to include rest days in your program.

Examples:

- Arrange to walk with a friend- you will be less likely to pull out.
- Reward yourself and your family and friends who support you.
- To prevent boredom, do a different walk.
- Incorporate walking into your lifestyle.
- Walk to work, take a bus or train one way and walk back.
- Use a treadmill in place of outdoor walking, especially when it is dark or wet.

USEFUL EQUIPMENT FOR WALKING

- Water bottle.
- Snack food (low fat).
- Wear comfortable clothing that is not tight (fabric that draws moisture away from the skin to keep you cool).
- Wear layers, so that you can take items off as you warm up.
- Wear comfortable shoes that give good support, have shock absorbing cushioning and traction.
- Sunblock, sunglasses and hat.
- Insect repellent.