

FAST FACTS: Exercise

Exercise is any activity that requires physical effort (i.e. walking, yoga, Tia Chi, etc.). Regular exercise can help improve health, fitness and physical function as well as chronic pain. A medical professional should be consulted prior to initiation of any type of regular exercise program for individuals living with chronic pain.

✓ How Does it Work?

- Exercise improves strength, flexibility, endurance, and overall physical function allowing patients to perform daily activities with less effort
- Exercise activates inhibitory pathways in the central nervous system, which inhibit the sensation of pain and provide pain relief
- Exercise alters the immune system by reducing the release of inflammatory substances in the immune system and increasing the release of anti-inflammatory substances instead
- Exercise can also reduce stress, depression, and anxiety

✓ Different Types of Exercise

- Aerobic Exercise - moderate intensity physical activity that raises the heart rate and breathing rate. It will help your loved one be more active for a longer amount of time and lessen pain.
 - Examples: Walking, cycling, running, swimming, hiking, and gardening
- Strengthening - exercises that build muscle strength and endurance and reduces pain. This type of exercise will also improve your loved one's ability to perform tasks and participate in activities.
 - Examples: Pilates, resistance training
- Stretching- exercises that help with mobility, movement, and pain.
 - Examples: Yoga



✓ What You Can Do

- Determine the benefits of exercise for overall health as well as chronic pain management.
- Learn about the types of exercise, their benefits and determine which type might work for your loved one.
- Discuss exercise options with your loved one and their healthcare team to ensure a technique is appropriate for your loved one.
- Assist or encourage your loved one to exercise at moderate intensity for the best effects. They should be able to talk while exercising but not sing.

✓ What else the Caregiver should do

- Write down and share information about your loved one's pain with their provider
- Consider using a [Pain Diary](#) to note important information useful to the provider
- Encourage your loved one to try a non-drug treatment and document the impact on their pain in their Pain Diary

References:

Adapted from:

1. Fouladbakhsh, J.M., et al., Nondrug therapies for pain management among rural older adults. *Pain Manag Nurs*, 2011. 12(2): p. 70-81. 2. The Nursing Home Pain Management Algorithm Clinical Trial, R01 NR009100, 7/1/05 – 4/30/10; Mary Ersek (PI) Used with permission of Mary Ersek and HPNA (2009).
2. Maiorana, A. J., Williams, A. D., Askew, C. D., Levinger, I., Coombes, J., Vicenzino, B., Davison, K., Smart, N. A., & Selig, S. E. (2018). Exercise Professionals with Advanced Clinical Training Should be Afforded Greater Responsibility in Pre-Participation Exercise Screening: A New Collaborative Model between Exercise Professionals and Physicians. *Sports Medicine*, 48(6), 1293–1302. <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.uiowa.edu/10.1007/s40279-018-0888-2>

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