

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 Can You Do:

- Write down and share information about your pain with your healthcare provider
- Consider using a [Pain Diary](#) to note important information useful to the provider
- Try a non-drug treatment and document the impact on your pain in your Pain Diary

References:

Adapted from:

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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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