

# I'm in a wheelchair and I want to exercise



## Patient Information Leaflet





## **Introduction**

10 million people in the UK are living with a neurological condition resulting from disease, injury or damage to the body's nervous system (National Service Framework for Long Term Conditions, 2005).

## **Why should I exercise?**

- Reduce risk of heart disease, stroke and type II diabetes.
- Better health, mood and energy.
- Reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression
- Improve sleep.
- Improve body shape.
- More social opportunities.
- Reach and maintain a healthy weight.

## **What are the neurological benefits?**

- Help nerve impulses travel faster to the brain.
- Increase focus and ability to stay on task.
- Increase blood flow to the brain.
- Improve balance, strength, suppleness and mobility.
- Increase body awareness.

## How much exercise should I do?

For adults (aged 19-64), moderate exercise should add up to a total of 150 minutes (or 2.5 hours) per week. This could be achieved through 5 x 30 minutes or broken down into smaller 10 minute bouts. If exercising at a moderate intensity, you will still be able to talk but will be unable to sing a song.

Alternatively, if carrying out vigorous exercise, the amount recommended is halved to around 75mins (or 1.25 hours) per week. If exercising at a vigorous intensity, you won't be able to say more than a few words without pausing for breath.

**Remember** - You may have to start off with only 5 minutes of exercise and gradually build this up over a period of weeks and months (Department of Health).

## What types of exercise can I do?

Activity	Calories burned in 15 minutes
Playing cards	30
Playing board games	30
Ironing	34
Playing with children, sitting down	42
Driving	40
Playing a guitar	60
Wheelchair basketball	111

Note - The amount of calories burned will vary depending on your weight, gender and intensity of exercise.

## What precautions are there to exercising?

Carrying out physical activities will come with precautions. These are some of the things that you should be aware of prior to, during and following your exercise.

- **Pain** – No exercise should cause you discomfort. If this occurs, stop the exercise and seek advice.
- **Fatigue** – Some neurological conditions may cause you to suffer from fatigue. Consider this factor following your exercise. Pacing and structuring your exercise programme can help reduce fatigue, ask your physiotherapist for strategies.
- **Medications** – It is always best to check with your GP prior to exercising if you are taking any medications.
- **Medical history** – Exercise will alter your heart rate, blood pressure and other body systems. If you suffer from other medical conditions, it is advised that you check with your GP first.
- **Dehydration** – Exercise will make you thirsty, so it is essential that you take on enough fluids, as dehydration can make you feel unwell.

## What are the next steps?

You could try contacting one, or a few, of the following:

- Local leisure centres to enquire about suitable facilities, classes and support.
- GP for information on improving your fitness.
- Search the internet for activities in your local area.
- Speak to different support agencies for more information e.g. Headway, Stroke Association, MS Society etc
- Speak to your physiotherapist.
- Incorporate more activity into your daily routine.

- Speak to your family and get them involved too.
- Speak to your social worker with regards to support accessing exercise in the community.
- Consider use of Apps to assist with exercise or activity ideas.

For more information on the benefits of exercise, please refer to 'Physical Activity and Mental Health Factsheet' found in the Knowledge Centre at Walkergate Park.

## References

- [www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk)
- [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)
- [www.bhf.org.uk](http://www.bhf.org.uk)
- [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)
- [www.csp.org.uk](http://www.csp.org.uk)
- [www.thecalculator.co.uk](http://www.thecalculator.co.uk)
- National Service framework for Long Term Conditions, 2005

## What if I have a comment, suggestion, compliment or complaint about the service?

If you want to make a comment, suggestion, compliment or complaint you can:

- talk to the people directly involved in your care
- ask a member of staff for a feedback form, or complete a form on the Trust website [www.ntw.nhs.uk](http://www.ntw.nhs.uk) (click on the 'Contact Us' tab)
- telephone the Complaints Department Tel: 0191 245 6672
- email [complaints@ntw.nhs.uk](mailto:complaints@ntw.nhs.uk) Please note that information sent to the Trust via email is sent at your own risk
- We are always looking at ways to improve services. Your feedback allows us to monitor the quality of our services and act upon issues that you bring to our attention.

You can provide feedback in the following ways:

- the quickest way for you to do this is to complete our short online survey at [www.ntw.nhs.uk/poy](http://www.ntw.nhs.uk/poy)
- complete a Points of You survey, available on wards, reception areas or from staff.
- some areas of the Trust have electronic feedback touch screens, staff can help you to use these.

Walkergate Park Health Promotion Group, February 2012, Vicki Macdonald (Advanced Physiotherapist), Helen Dobinson (Advanced Physiotherapist).



Further information about the content, reference sources or production of this leaflet can be obtained from the Patient Information Centre. If you would like to tell us what you think about this leaflet please get in touch.

This information can be made available in a range of formats on request (eg Braille, audio, larger print, easy read, BSL or other languages). Please contact the Patient Information Centre  
Tel: 0191 246 7288

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