

## EXERCISING WITH A HEALTH CHALLENGE

**E**xercise can increase longevity and quality of life; improve energy, strength, balance and coordination; and act as a potent pain reliever and antidepressant. Its benefits can reach all people, perhaps especially those with health conditions. But many people don't know what exercise guidelines to follow for optimal health and management of their disease or disorder. If this sounds like you, look no further than your physician and local ACE-certified Advanced Health & Fitness Specialist.

### Start With Your Healthcare Practitioner

Before beginning an exercise program, talk with your physician. Inquire about special limitations you need to be aware of and ask your physician if he or she can refer you to a fitness professional who is experienced in training clients with your condition.

### Certified Fitness Professionals Make a Difference

A certified fitness professional with experience working with individuals with your medical condition can help you jumpstart a fitness program and ensure that your program is safe, effective and enjoyable. The key is to find the right person to meet your needs. Do this by asking questions, such as:

- Where did you receive your exercise science education and experience? What certifications do you have? (Be sure that he or she has received certification from an accredited and reputable organization.)
- What is your experience training individuals with my health condition?
- Do you have any concerns about training me? If you do not feel comfortable training me, can you refer me to another experienced trainer?
- What knowledge do you have of my medical condition? (Beyond present knowledge, try to determine if the trainer is motivated to learn more about your condition to provide you the best care.)
- What can I expect to achieve with an exercise program?
- May I contact other clients of yours and ask them about their experiences working with you? (When you talk to these clients, ask them if they were pleased with their workouts, if the trainer was punctual and prepared, if they felt their individual needs were addressed, and any other questions that you have.)

### Conditions That May Require Special Exercise Guidelines

#### Cardiovascular Disease and Risk Factors:

- Hypertension
- Elevated blood cholesterol
- Diabetes
- Angina
- Post-heart attack or post-bypass
- Heart valve disease
- Peripheral circulatory disease

#### Breathing Conditions:

- Asthma
- Emphysema

#### Bone or Joint Conditions:

- Low-back pain
- Osteoporosis
- Post-surgical/rehabilitation
- Arthritis

#### Other Conditions:

- Neuromuscular (stroke, Parkinson's disease, epilepsy, fibromyalgia)
- Breast cancer
- Vision or hearing impairments
- Pregnancy
- Psychological disorders
- Mental handicaps

*Note:* This list is not exhaustive, so speak with your health practitioner about exercise-program modifications or limitations specific to your condition.

Tell the fitness professional about your general health, your specific illness or injury and your physical-activity history. He or she may administer fitness assessments, such as a range-of-motion test for a certain joint or cardiorespiratory testing to measure heart rate during aerobic exercise. This information will help you and your trainer establish realistic goals and design a safe and effective exercise program.

Your trainer also may request to speak with your healthcare provider. (These conversations about your personal health information should only occur with your consent.) The trainer may

want to ask the physician for specific guidance, clarify your physical-activity program goals or simply introduce him or herself as a member of the healthcare team that is helping you to achieve your goals.

### Your Exercise Program

With few exceptions, a quality exercise program includes cardiovascular training, resistance training and flexibility exercises. And whether you exercise one-on-one or in a group, training should progress from an initial, easy effort to a challenging workout. Also make sure that you are offered exercise modifications and exercise recommendations tailored to your fitness level and abilities.

Exercise can be an important, fulfilling part of coping with a chronic disease or recovering from injury. Coordinate with your healthcare provider and fitness professional to make the most of your exercise experience, and to improve your health and quality of life.

### Additional Resources

The National Center on Physical Fitness and Disability: [www.ncpad.org](http://www.ncpad.org)

Mayo Clinic—Exercise and Disability: Physical Activity Is Within Your Reach: [www.cnn.com/HEALTH/library/SM/0042.html](http://www.cnn.com/HEALTH/library/SM/0042.html)

American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation: [www.aapmr.org](http://www.aapmr.org)

*If you are interested in information on other health and fitness topics, contact: American Council on Exercise, 4851 Paramount Drive, San Diego, CA 92123, 800-825-3636; or, go online at [www.acefitness.org/GetFit](http://www.acefitness.org/GetFit) and access the complete list of ACE Fit Facts.™*



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