

Exercise and health conditions can mix

Working out isn't easy, and if you have a health condition, exercise may seem even more difficult. In many cases, exercise is not only safe for those with health conditions — it's recommended. Being active may improve your overall health and help you manage your condition. And, it can help you feel better too.

Check out some of the ways exercise can help you if you have a health condition. Ask your doctor which activities are best for you.



ARTHRITIS

Exercise can prevent or slow some types of arthritis. In fact, it may be the most effective non-drug treatment for reducing pain and improving movement in people who have osteoarthritis (OA). Walking and water exercises are generally good choices.



DEPRESSION

Depression, anxiety and high stress can be alleviated with exercise. Aerobic exercise may improve mood, sleep and self-esteem. The chemicals released during exercise have feel-good effects on the brain. Try walking, biking, aerobics or dancing.



HEART DISEASE

You can improve heart health when you move. Physical activity reduces your chance of having a heart attack or stroke. It helps your heart work better and improves blood flow. Forty minutes of moderate activity 3 to 4 times per week can lower cholesterol and blood pressure. If you have chest pain, or recently had a heart attack or a heart procedure, ask your doctor before you start exercising.



BLOOD SUGAR

Working out may help manage blood sugar and diabetes. During exercise, your cells become more sensitive to insulin so it can work better. The cells are also able to lower your blood sugar. If you have diabetes, regular exercise can mean fewer diabetes medicines or less insulin. People with diabetes should ask their doctor how they can exercise safely before they begin exercise.



ASTHMA/COPD

Asthma and COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) can make exercise more challenging, but it's often possible to do safely. Exercise can help manage weight, reduce stress and keep the heart healthy — all important factors with asthma and COPD. In general, people with asthma or COPD should avoid exercise when temperatures are low and air is dry or polluted. Wearing a mask over the mouth can help, and doing a proper warm-up and cool-down is also advised. Always carry your rescue inhaler when you exercise.

Even if you don't have a health condition, exercise to stay healthy. Regular physical activity can reduce the risk of many diseases including some cancers, and help you live longer. Talk to your doctor before you start an exercise routine.