

Staying active with a disability



Most of us know that exercise is great for our health. But, if you or someone in your family has a disability, exercise can feel like a difficult task. Not only do you have to find time and energy to do it, but you need to worry about accessibility, too.

Make sure your doctor gives you the okay before you begin any exercise program.

It can be frustrating when your favorite activity doesn't seem to work for you. But, some extra research may be worth the effort. These tips can help you get started:

- **Check into races.** There are many 5K, 10K and longer races that are accessible to people with many types of disabilities. And, many of them raise money for charitable causes. This may also help motivate your family to get out and train for a race and have fun together. Be sure to ask in advance about accessibility to be sure it will work for you.

- **Get outside and do what you love.** Have outside time a few times a week. This can be as simple as throwing a ball in the yard, going to an accessible playground, gardening or playing with the hose or sprinkler on a hot day.
- **Ditch the car for short trips.** If you live near a town, consider walking to the store for an errand. If this isn't realistic, get some miles in at a mall or shopping center. Park at one end and visit the shops all the way at the other end.
- **Modify your sports.** Many sports can be fun and challenging with some minor changes. Walking instead of running for soccer, using a larger or softer ball for volleyball, or omitting the net in tennis may make the game work for you.
- **Try low impact activities.** Joining an aquatic exercise program or using rowing machines are two great activities for those who have joint limitations.

ACTIVITIES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Check with the following organizations to see who offers adaptive programs and activities:

- Your city or county recreation department
- Local YMCA or YWCA
- Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts councils
- Nearby high schools, colleges and universities
- Chamber of Commerce
- Center for Independent Living (CIL)
- National and State parks (many have paved hiking trails)

Finally, talk with your doctor or health care provider about your desire to get active. They may have resources to help you get started. Join support groups with people who have disabilities like yours and use the power of community to find out about fun and active things you can do.



Sources: *The National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability (NCHPAD), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*