

PHYSICAL EXERCISE CHRONIC KIDNEY DISEASE



PHYSICAL EXERCISE

Physical exercise is any activity created by doing body movements to maintain or improve overall health. Activity can be unplanned (e.g. housework, gardening, walking to work, going up stairs) or part of a planned exercise programme (e.g. walking exercise, jogging, swimming, cycling, dancing). Research work has shown that regular aerobic exercise improves physical fitness, walking capacity, heart rate, blood pressure readings and blood sugar levels. For people with chronic kidney disease (CKD), regular aerobic exercise is recommended.

WHAT ARE THE EXERCISES THAT ARE RECOMMENDED?

Below are some examples of aerobic exercises:

- Walking 30 minutes most days of the week
- Swimming
- Jogging
- Dancing
- Cycling

If your physical condition allows, you may practice more vigorous exercise such as sports:

- Running
- Tennis/badminton
- Golf
- Football
- Squash

PHYSICAL EXERCISE

Other examples that you can do to strengthen your muscles, according to your physical ability:

- Doing push-ups & sit-ups
- Heavy gardening, e.g. digging
- Yoga (yoga practice can work your whole body: stretching, toning and firming your muscles)

WHAT TYPE OF EXERCISE SHOULD YOU DO?

If you do not have the habit of exercising or have not exercised for some time, you should talk to your doctor or nurse about which type of exercise will suit you. Regular aerobic exercises at a moderate intensity are usually recommended; that is, exercising at a pace that you can talk comfortably while carrying out the activity. This is a sign that you are doing the appropriate intensity. Once your speech starts to break or cause discomfort, you are then exercising too hard (talk test).

PHYSICAL EXERCISE

CAN YOU EXERCISE IF YOU ARE A WHEELCHAIR USER?

Yes, although this can be more of a challenge. There is a variety of ways for wheelchair users to exercise, depending on your health condition and determination.

For example:

- You may be taught to use resistance bands to do muscle-strengthening exercises at home.
- You may consult your doctor/nurse for advice to go to a gymnasium for guided and monitored exercises or join in a local recreation centre for disabled people.



WALKING IS THE IDEAL EXERCISE FOR MOST PEOPLE.

If your physical condition does not prevent you, walking is one of the easiest and cheapest ways to maintain an active lifestyle and improve overall health. It can be done indoors or outdoors and briskly or slowly.

PHYSICAL EXERCISE

HOW DOES WALKING HELP?

When you walk, your body's large muscle groups move repetitively. This process helps to improve your blood flow and strengthen your muscles.

SHOULD YOU EXERCISE IF YOU OFTEN FEEL TIRED?

After studying the possible causes of your tiredness, the type of exercise will be recommended and adapted to your ability and clinical conditions. If you do the right type of exercise it can make you feel better and stronger. You should have enough rest but lack of exercise will make your muscles to become weaker.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD YOU WALK?

To maintain or improve your physical and mental health, it is recommended that you should walk about 30 minutes a day. It is also useful to:

- Make walking a habit in your daily routine. For example: use public transportation, cycle or walk to your destination instead of using your car.
- Organise walking outings with your family or friends. This is a good way to enjoy social activities.

PHYSICAL EXERCISE

WHAT TYPE OF CLOTHES AND SHOES SHOULD YOU WEAR?

You should wear clothes suitable for the weather. It is important that you wear a suitable and comfortable pair of shoes for walking.

WHAT IF THE WEATHER IS BAD FOR WALKING OUTDOOR?

You may consider walking up and down the stairs or walking several times around your home (e.g. the distance of a corridor or from room to room). To make this more enjoyable, you may like to listen to your favorite song/music. If you can afford it, having a static bike or a treadmill machine at home may be an alternative.

PHYSICAL EXERCISE

HOW SHOULD YOU START AND FINISH YOUR EXERCISE?

Always consult your doctor/nurse at your Kidney Clinic before you start on any exercise programme. To prevent muscle strains or injury, the following 3 steps are usually recommended:

1. Warming up by walking slowly for 5 minutes and then speed up
2. Walking briskly for 30 minutes or more, depending on your tolerance, at least three times every week. If you are not used to this, start with what you can manage and gradually work up to it
3. Cooling down by slowing the pace for the last 5 minutes of your walk. This will allow your body to come back to a more relaxed state.

HOW MUCH LIQUID SHOULD YOU DRINK?

It is important that you drink enough water for exercising. Consult your doctor/nurse about how much liquid you can drink when you exercise. Avoid sport drinks that have added potassium and vitamin supplements. Make sure that the amount you drink does not lead to fluid overload if you are on a fluid restriction.

PHYSICAL EXERCISE

WHERE CAN YOU GET MORE INFORMATION ABOUT EXERCISE?

You can get more information from your doctor or nurse at your Kidney Clinic. Perhaps they can refer you to a physiotherapist for more advice. Example of reliable websites:

- <http://www.diabetes.co.uk/exercise-for-diabetics.html>
- <http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/fitness/Pages/physicalactivityguidelines-for-adults.aspx>
- <http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Disability/Pages/fitnessforwheelchairusers.aspx>
- <http://www.health.gov/paguidelines/pdf/adultguide.pdf>

KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Seek advice from your doctor or nurse before starting an exercise programme.
- If physically fit, walking is the easiest exercise to maintain an active lifestyle.
- If you are a wheelchair user, you may seek for advice regarding exercising.
- To be beneficial, exercise should be done on a regular basis.

The Patient Education Document is sponsored by B. Braun Avitum AG.

Text: Anastasia Liossatos, RN, Dip (Edu), MSc.(Nursing) - Greece.

Review: Lesley Bennett, RN, RM, BA, MSc - UK

Illustration: Miquel Àngel Velasco Martín, PhD (Cotemporary History), Watercolourist. Barcelona, Catalunya – Spain (renal patient).