

General exercise advice

* Exercise at a time of day when you feel best and that works well with your daily routine.
* Choose a type of exercise that you like and that suits your abilities.
* Include a combination of different types of exercise (flexibility, aerobic, strengthening and balance). There is no one specific exercise that has been shown to be better than others for people with Multiple Sclerosis (MS).
* Try to build your exercise programme into your daily routine and make it a regular habit.
* If possible, exercise with others for support and encouragement and to increase motivation.
* Wear loose comfortable clothing, keep cool and keep hydrated.
* If you have not been doing much exercise and need an individualised programme and specific assessment of symptoms and advice, ask your doctor to refer you to a physiotherapist with neurology expertise. You should always see a physiotherapist at the time of diagnosis, for a baseline physical assessment, if you experience any change in mobility such as increased stiffness, worsening weakness or altered balance, and if you are admitted to hospital for an acute relapse.

**Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines for people with MS**

* These guidelines were developed in 2013 by an expert panel and are based on an extensive review of the current evidence and research examining the effects of exercise on fitness, fatigue, mobility, and health-related quality of life among people with MS.
* Studies have shown that exercise is safe for people with MS, can decrease the number of relapses and can even help to slow disease progression.
* The guidelines recommend aiming for a ***minimum*** *of 30 minutes of aerobic exercise* (e.g. walking, swimming, cycling, dancing) on at least *two days per week* and *strength training* for the major muscle groups (e.g. using free weights or weights machines, 10 -15 repetitions and build up to two sets of 15), *two days per week*.

**General benefits of exercise**

* Decreased risk of heart disease and decreased blood pressure
* Decreased cholesterol
* Decreased obesity and obesity-related diseases such as type 2 diabetes
* Can help manage osteoporosis
* It may help prevent or delay cognitive decline
* May reduce or prevent depression and overall improvement in mood and general wellbeing
* Improved sleeping pattern.

**Falls risk questions – please answer yes or no**

* Have you had a fall in the past?
* Have you problems with bladder control?
* Have you any worries or concerns about falling?

*If you answered yes to any of these questions, you are at an increased risk of falling and should attend a physiotherapist for targeted falls prevention exercises and advice.*

Useful resources:

Some online resources in relation to exercise, balance and fatigue are available through:

* The MS Society of Ireland at [www.ms-society.ie](http://www.ms-society.ie) and <https://www.ms-society.ie/move-smart-ms> (specialist online exercise programmes).
* The UK MS Society at [www.mssociety.org.uk](http://www.mssociety.org.uk) (there are videos with exercises for specific MS symptoms on this site).
* The MS Trust at [www.mstrust.org.uk](http://www.mstrust.org.uk) (can download PDFs of advice and exercises to manage specific symptoms).