

The Overcoming MS Program emphasises exercise as a crucial component of managing multiple sclerosis (MS) and enhancing overall health and well-being. Regular physical activity helps maintain mobility, reduce symptoms, and improve mental health.

Core principles



1. Regular physical activity

Incorporate regular physical activity into your routine to improve both physical and mental well-being. Aim for at least 30 minutes of exercise, three to five times a week.



2. Flexibility and strength

Focus on exercises that enhance flexibility and strength. This includes stretching routines and strength training to maintain muscle mass and support joint health.



3. Cardio and aerobic exercise

Engage in cardiovascular exercises to improve heart health and stamina if possible. Activities like walking, swimming, cycling, and dancing are beneficial.



4. Neuroplasticity

Exercise promotes neuroplasticity, the brain's ability to form and reorganise synaptic connections, especially after injury. This can help modify the course of MS and improve overall brain health.

Reccomended types of exercise



1. Aerobic exercise

Activities like walking, running, swimming, and cycling improve cardiovascular health and can help manage weight. Aerobic exercises also release endorphins, which enhance mood and reduce depression.



2. Strength training

Use weights, resistance bands, or body-weight exercises to build muscle strength. This helps support joints, improve posture, and enhance daily functional abilities.



3. Flexibility and stretching

Incorporate stretching exercises to improve flexibility and range of motion. Yoga and Pilates are excellent for maintaining flexibility and core strength.



4. Balance and coordination

Balance exercises are crucial for preventing falls and improving coordination. Tai Chi and specific balance drills can be particularly beneficial.

Tailoring exercise to individual needs

1. Personalised exercise plans

Work with a physical therapist or exercise specialist to develop a personalised exercise plan that suits your individual needs and abilities. This is especially important if you have specific mobility issues or other health concerns.

2. Progressive MS considerations

For those with a degree of disability, exercises can very often be adapted to account for reduced mobility and other functional losses. Gentle, low-impact activities like water aerobics can be effective.

3. Wheel chair exercises

If mobility is severely restricted, there are still numerous exercises that can be done from a seat or wheelchair to maintain upper body strength and flexibility.



Benefits of exercise

Improved mobility

Regular exercise helps maintain and improve mobility, making it easier to perform daily activities.

Mental health

Exercise reduces symptoms of depression and anxiety, boosts mood, and improves overall quality of life.

Cognitive function

Physical activity has been shown to help prevent cognitive decline and promote brain health.

Physical health

Regular exercise improves cardiovascular health, aids in weight management, and enhances overall physical fitness.

Tips for success

Consistency

Make exercise a regular part of your routine. Consistency is key to reaping the long-term benefits of physical activity.

Listen to your body

Pay attention to your body's signals. Rest when needed and avoid overexertion, especially during MS flare-ups.

Safety first

Ensure you have a safe environment for exercise, with appropriate equipment and spaces to prevent injuries.

Community and support

Engage with the Overcoming MS community or local support groups for motivation and support. Exercising with others can enhance the experience and provide encouragement.

Variety and enjoyment

Choose activities you enjoy to make exercise a pleasant part of your day. Mixing different types of exercises can also prevent boredom and address various aspects of fitness.



Incorporating these exercise principles into your lifestyle can help manage MS symptoms, improve physical health, and enhance overall well-being. The Overcoming MS Program provides a structured approach to integrating exercise into daily life, tailored to the unique needs of individuals with MS.



Learn more

By integrating these principles, the Overcoming MS Program empowers individuals with MS to take control of their health and live fuller, healthier lives.

For more detailed information and resources, visit our website on www.overcomingms.org

