

MS GET FIT TOOLKIT

A RESOURCE TO HELP ADULTS LIVING WITH MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS (MS) MEET THE CANADIAN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY GUIDELINES

YOUR ability:

Do what you can to work towards meeting the guidelines

YOUR way:

Pick moderate intensity activities that feel good and that you enjoy



If you are an adult with mild to moderate disability resulting from relapsing or progressive forms of MS, this Toolkit is for you.

GUIDELINES AT A GLANCE

For important fitness benefits, adults with MS who have mild or moderate disability need at least:

- 30 minutes of **aerobic** activity, 2 times per week, AND
- **Strength**-training exercises for major muscle groups, 2 times per week

Here's what to aim for:

How hard?

- Aerobic activities should be moderate in intensity; you should be able to talk – but not sing!
- Aim to do 2 sets of strength exercises for each major muscle group, with 10-15 repetitions per set.
- Strength-training activities should be difficult enough that you can barely finish the second set.
- Major muscle groups include arms, legs, chest, back, buttocks and core (abdominals).

How much rest?

- It's fine to do aerobic and strength-training activities on the same day.
- Avoid strength training the same muscle group (such as legs or abdominals) two days in a row – your body needs a break in between sessions.



BENEFITS OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

In the past, people with MS were told they shouldn't be physically active.

THE FACTS ARE:

- Research shows that following the guidelines should improve aerobic fitness and strength.
- Meeting the guidelines may also reduce fatigue, improve mobility and enhance your overall well-being.
- There is no scientific evidence that following the guidelines will worsen MS symptoms.

"Physical activity has had a huge impact on my overall energy levels. Weight training has helped a lot with everyday activities – such as transferring, getting out of bed, and reaching for objects. The gym is also a great place to meet and talk to people."

– Shawn, primary-progressive MS, diagnosed in 2006

"The importance of exercise and regular physical activity CANNOT be overstated. It can mean the difference between function and dysfunction, ability and disability, wellness and illness, improvement and decline."

– Dr. Tania R. Bruno, Specialist Physician in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation

Important tips to avoid injury

- Progress at your own pace. You are aiming for a little muscle soreness and fatigue, not intense pain or exhaustion.
- Ask a health professional such as a doctor, physiotherapist, or qualified exercise professional for activity suggestions.



ACTIVITY EXAMPLES

MS affects everyone differently. Try to find a mix of moderate-intensity activities that suit your abilities and lifestyle. Some examples are provided below.

If you walk independently or with a mobility aid, give these activities a try:

Aerobic

- Walk or bike
- Dance
- Swim or join an aqua fitness class
- Play a team sport or an active game with your family or friends

Strength training

- Lift weights (free weights or machines)
- Use resistance bands
- Use your body weight. Do adapted push-ups, squats

If you use a manual or power wheelchair, give these activities a try:

Aerobic

- Cycle with a hand cycle or on a stationary bike
- Wheel
- Swim or join an aqua fitness class
- Play a sport or an active video game

Strength training

- Lift weights (free weights or machines)
- Use resistance bands

Tai Chi, Yoga, Pilates and stretching are great activities to do **in addition** to the physical activities you do to meet the guidelines. They can build flexibility, balance, and body awareness.



Looking for more ideas about how to get active? Check out the following websites:

MS Society of Canada:
www.mssociety.ca/physicalactivity

Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology:
www.csep.ca/guidelines

BE ACTIVE ... YOUR WAY

The challenges of MS are real. Becoming and staying active can be challenging. Here are some ways to overcome possible barriers.

I experience MS-related fatigue.

- Start slowly. Physical activity can be tiring at first, but it will energize you in the long run.
- Rest afterward. The idea is to work your muscles until they are slightly fatigued. Then let your body rest and get strong again.
- Believe you can do it. Studies show that those with a positive attitude find ways to exercise.

I have chronic pain.

- Ask a health professional if it is safe to start or to continue exercising.
- Try different activities and types of equipment; find what works for you based on where you are feeling pain.

I have little access to a fitness centre.

- Make physical activity part of your daily life.
- Use physical activity to get from place to place.
- Try an exercise video at home.
- Walk or wheel around your neighbourhood.

I need more support or information.

- Get a physical activity buddy.
- Join an adapted sports team in your community.
- Find a local walking club.
- Connect with others on Facebook and Twitter to discuss physical activity.
- Visit the following websites:
 - www.mssociety.ca/physicalactivity
 - www.csep.ca/guidelines

Tips to avoid overheating:

- Be active in air conditioned spaces on hot, humid days.
- Drink lots of cool water.
- Keep a spray bottle of water nearby, to cool yourself down regularly.
- Consider doing pool-based activities.
- Monitor how you are feeling. Find a spot to cool off if you are getting too warm.
- Consider investing in cooling equipment such as a vest, collar, or cuffs.

