

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Note: Always consult with your medical team before engaging in new physical activity.

What is physical activity?

Physical activity simply means movement of the body that uses energy. Any time you are moving your body, you are getting physical activity. Any type of movement is healthy, but being active for an extended period of time seems to have the most health benefits. Some examples are:

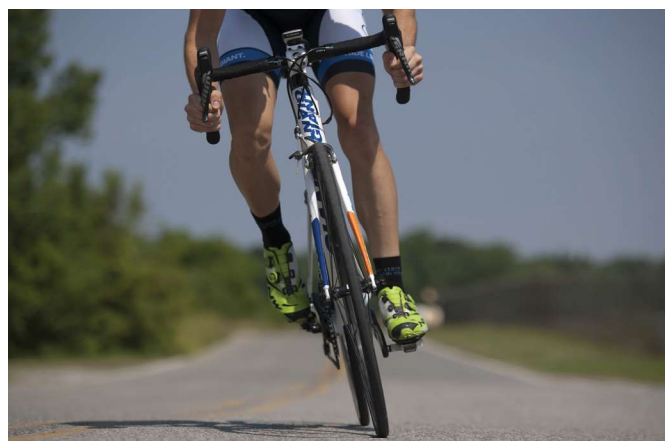
- ▶ Walking, running
- ▶ Gardening, housecleaning
- ▶ Lifting weights
- ▶ Yoga
- ▶ Martial arts
- ▶ Dancing
- ▶ Riding a bike, roller blading, skate boarding
- ▶ Playing a sport



Why is physical activity important for people living with epilepsy, their families, and their caregivers?

People with epilepsy get the same health benefits from exercise as people without epilepsy. Regular exercise provides physical and emotional benefits such as:

- ▶ Increased stamina, strength, flexibility, and balance
- ▶ Weight and fat loss
- ▶ Improved mood
- ▶ Reduced stress
- ▶ Improved quality of sleep
- ▶ Lower risk of illness
- ▶ Increased bone density and reduced risk of osteoporosis



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For individuals with epilepsy and seizures, exercise may help:

- ▶ Seizure control
- ▶ Reducing some side effects of seizure medications
- ▶ Mood problems or stress
- ▶ Sleep (lessen the risk of sleep deprivation triggering seizures)
- ▶ Cognition (thinking, memory, attention)
- ▶ Overall quality of life

How much and how often should I exercise each week?

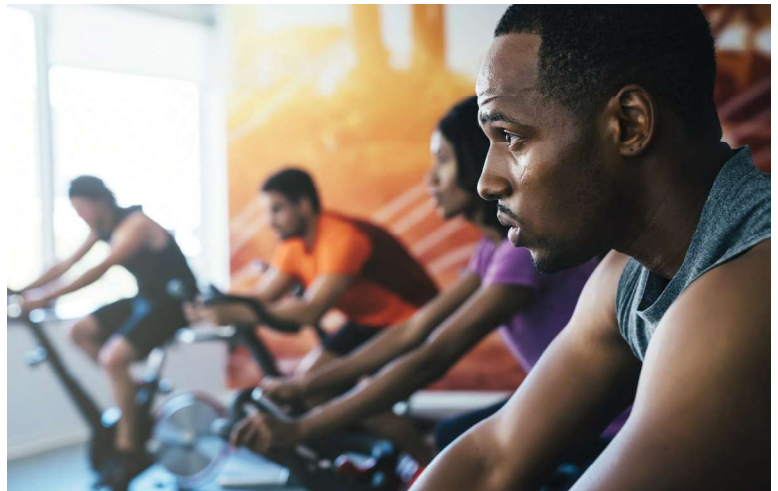
The US Department of Health and Human Services gives the following physical activity guidelines for adults.

Aerobic Activity:

- ▶ 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity or 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity weekly
- ▶ Ideally time is spread out over the course of the week

Strength Training:

- ▶ At least 2 days a week
- ▶ Ideally exercising all major muscle groups of the body



The physical activity guidelines vary for different age groups. Please consult with your medical team for your individual recommendations.

How can I get more active and exercise if I have other medical problems or disabilities too?

People with seizures may have other medical problems that affect their ability to move around, do daily activities, or join exercise programs. Don't let these problems get in your way.

To get started, talk to your health care team about what is getting in the way of being physically active. It's important to know the cause so you can find ways to address it.

- ▶ If pain limits activity and exercise, you need to find the source of pain and get help for this first. Exercise may be part of the solution, but talk to your health care team first.

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- ▶ If muscle weakness or coordination problems are part of the problem, exercise may help. Also, activities can be adapted to your strength and coordination.
- ▶ If you have trouble walking or tend to fall, do exercises lying down or in a chair.

How do I know what types of activity are right for me?

Talk to your health care team about your health and recommended activity. If you have not been exercising or have other medical problems or disabilities, ask to see a physical therapist (PT). They can:

- ▶ Treat some health problems with specific exercise plans
- ▶ Help design an exercise program tailored to your needs
- ▶ Work with you individually on specific problem areas
- ▶ Show you how to do exercises on your own
- ▶ Do a home safety evaluation

How can I stay safe while being physically active?

Safety is always the top priority. Talk to your health care team about your safety risks. Then make a safety plan that includes what you can do, how to increase activity, what activities to avoid, and what precautions you may need.

Most activities are safe for people with epilepsy even if their seizures aren't fully controlled. However, the more severe a person's seizures, the greater the need for that person to limit or modify activities. Some examples of safety tips:

- ▶ Keep your medical alert information with you at all times, including what to do if you have a seizure.
- ▶ Use common sense—certain activities may need special accommodations or should be avoided (rock climbing without safety equipment, scuba diving, skydiving, etc.)
- ▶ Exercise with a buddy.
- ▶ Always have close supervision when swimming or doing water sports. For some people, it may be safest to avoid activities around water.



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- ▶ Avoid exercising at the hottest times of the day.
- ▶ Exercise in safe places—walk, run, or bike in parks or on bike paths, not on busy streets.
- ▶ Work out on soft surfaces if you are at risk for falls.
- ▶ Use safety equipment appropriate for the activity and your seizure type.
- ▶ Always wear a high-quality, properly fitted life vest when near the water.
- ▶ Wear a helmet to protect your brain during activities at risk for falls.

How do I get started?

Start where you are today. That may mean walking around the block or up and down your stairs. It may mean joining an exercise class. Find an activity that you will enjoy so you're more likely to stick with it. The main thing is to start moving today and keep at it.

Below are some ways to help stick to a fitness routine.

- ▶ Schedule it in your calendar.
- ▶ Find a workout partner.
- ▶ Schedule an appointment with a trainer/fitness professional.
- ▶ Track progress.
- ▶ Keep in mind why you want to be more physically active.
- ▶ Wear a helmet to protect your brain during activities at risk for falls.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- ▶ Fitness and Exercise: epilepsy.com/wellness-fitness-exercise
- ▶ CDC Physical Activity: cdc.gov/physicalactivity