

Foundations of Health – Movement

Movement for Health

For most of us, a healthy movement routine can bring about improvements in mental and physical health. Exercise can also be used to form social connections and helps us connect to nature and the great outdoors. Finding what works for you means looking at the type, intensity, duration and the social context of exercise.

However, as with relaxation, finding the right type and level of exercise is not always straightforward and there is no correct or best choice for everyone. We have outlined some ideas below aimed at the full spectrum of patients we see in the clinic.

Pacing: Sometimes NO EXERCISE is the best Choice

For those with CFS / ME, it is important to take into account your energy reserves and whether you will be able to repay any energy debt incurred by a particular exercise. If you have significant post-exertional malaise, POTS or are prone to energy ‘crashes’ then the correct choice for you may be to stop exercise and to rest to try and build up reserves of energy for healing and the essential activities of daily living.

Delayed Onset Muscle soreness (DOMS), or mental fatigue brought on within hours or a day or so of exercise is a sign that the intrinsic energy production systems are lacking and require some kind of input or fix before you can progress to any form of graded exercise therapy. This doesn't mean you should necessarily do nothing – rather the amount of energy expended should not cause any worsening afterwards, and the activity should be reproducible on a daily basis without causing any worsening of symptoms.

In severe cases, even mental stimulation or activity will cause exhaustion. In these cases, lying horizontal and resting to reserve at least 20% of energy produced per day for healing is advised.

While pacing is not a treatment for CFS/ME, it does provide a way of coping with the lack of energy and preventing the debilitating ‘crashes’ which are a notable feature of this illness. ME-pedia.org, have covered this topic in some detail with some useful resources here:

<https://me-pedia.org/wiki/Pacing>

Simple Home Exercise / Starting Out:

For those who are able to exercise without making themselves feel worse, but are struggling to get exercise into their routine, the important thing is to get started. We can't advise you on exactly what would be best for you, but love Dr Chatterjee's practical approach to getting moving in your own home – no special equipment required:

Wake up your Sleepy Glutes: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KWwSm_0BtuY

The 5-minute kitchen workout: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jtZB95-AVZM>

Activity Tracking:

No matter the type of exercise that you choose to engage in is important to aim to move regularly throughout the day and avoid prolonged sitting, which is linked to insulin resistance, obesity and increased CVD risk. Even if you already dedicate at least 30 minutes a day to structured exercise (as per NICE recommendations), it's still important to get up and move for at least a few minutes, multiple times throughout the day.

To achieve that, you may find an activity tracker that will give you regular reminders to get up and move helpful. You can find trackers in the link below:

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Sports-Activity-Trackers/b?ie=UTF8&node=4294916031>

Choosing something you enjoy:

Sometimes the best exercise is simply the one which you will do because it brings you joy. Do you want to dance / climb / run / walk / swim / garden or golf? Does yoga appeal or would you prefer a martial arts class? If you hate being cold and wet, then choose an indoor activity, if you love feeling the wind and rain on your face then maybe joining the local running or wild swimming group might be the best thing for you. Engaging with others or the outdoors are key elements which can make exercise fun, interesting and enjoyable. Look for local clubs, gyms and support networks. Being surrounded by like-minded people can help improve motivation and make getting fit really enjoyable.

In our clinic we all have a huge range of interests from hill walking, climbing and cycling through to karate and kick-boxing. Joanne and Laura are cold-water enthusiasts. If you don't already have something you love then try something new.

Exercise for Bone Density Problems

Weight-bearing exercise is particularly important to help reduce bone thinning. For those with osteopenia or osteoporosis, physical therapy is essential in helping to improve and re-build bone density (alongside nutritional interventions).

Margaret Martin provides an excellent practical overview of what has been shown to work from yoga, to rebounding and 'stomping' exercises. Her website with reference to exercise videos and her exercise plans for Osteoporosis can be found here:

<https://melioguide.com>

<https://melioguide.com/health-guides/osteoporosis-guidelines/osteoporosis-exercise-plan/>

Motivational Online Trainers

For those that enjoy and can tolerate a more intensive resistance training sessions, we have canvassed staff and patients to curate a list of our favourite online exercise plans:

Caroline Girvan:

Enjoyed by our NT Kelly and Patient Pathway co-ordinator Sam. Great for home weight training, Calisthenics and body-weight exercises. Good for improving muscle strength and fitness.

Caroline presents a mixture of HIIT, resistance training and plyometrics. The Programmes are free with extensive YouTube Video workout support.

<https://www.carolinegirvan.com>

Sydney Cummings

Sydney is a motivational trainer and coach and has countless of free resistance training sessions on her YouTube channel. Whether you want a quick 5 minutes or a full 40-50 minute home workout, this might be one for you:

<https://www.youtube.com/c/SydneyCummings/playlists>

Pahla B

For gentler weight bearing sessions, you can follow Pahla B who offers free sessions on her YouTube channel. Phala specialises in offering exercise advice to the over-50's and her workouts are aimed at women who want to lose weight and feel motivated:

<https://pahlabfitness.com>

Exercise for Mind and Body

Yoga is a gentler form of exercise that combines breathing exercises, meditation, and poses. Studies show that practicing yoga has many mental and physical benefits. It increases flexibility, improves respiration, energy and helps to protect against injury:

You can join your local yoga class or you can try online sessions. Our personal recommendations are below:

Yoga With Adriene <https://yogawithadriene.com>

Well with Hels https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3gHlLc0-BsaF1A-o_LVg
Jessica Richburg <https://jessicarichburgyoga.com/>

Tai Chi - is a Chinese martial art practice which combines moving meditation in the form of a series of gentle exercises that create harmony between the mind and body. Although Tai Chi is slow and gentle, it has been shown to improve strength, flexibility and balance. Some studies show that it can also reduce falls and injuries in elderly. Here are few online resources you may enjoy:

Dr Paul Lam <https://www.youtube.com/@drpaulamtaichiproductions>

Leia Cohen Taiflow <https://www.youtube.com/@Taiflow>

Qigong practice typically involves moving meditation, coordinating slow-flowing movement, deep rhythmic breathing, and a calm meditative state of mind. People practice qigong throughout China and worldwide for recreation, exercise, relaxation, preventive medicine, self-healing, alternative medicine, meditation, self-cultivation, and training for martial arts. Online you may enjoy:

Thich Man Tue <https://www.youtube.com/@QigongMeditation/about>

Cold water swimming

Swimming in cold water has lots of reported benefits from aiding recovery and reducing inflammation to boosting your immune system and reducing stress and anxiety. Some swimmers also say that they don't feel the cold and therefore don't need to turn their heating on – helpful during a fuel crisis!

However, it's important to do this safely to avoid hypothermia and beginners should always be accompanied by someone else in case of problems. The Outdoor Swimming Society have plenty of hints and tips on getting started:

<https://www.outdoorswimmingsociety.com/how-to-acclimatise-to-cold-water/>

If you enjoy cold-water immersion, then you may want to consider combining it with yoga and the breathing exercises which form part of the powerful Wim Hof Technique:

<https://www.wimhofmethod.com>

There are plenty of groups and retreats available to help you learn and benefit from these techniques if this is something which interests you.

My Notes: