



## Fatigue Take Control Part 4

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>>**Speaker:** Adding exercise to your life is another way to take control of your fatigue. Checking with your doctor prior to starting or changing an exercise program, and finding the right program for you will ensure your success.

>>**Speaker:** I used to think I was superwoman and I did a lot of jogging, and I used to walk with my neighbors every morning three miles. That was an hour, and it was 5:30 to 6:30 a.m. That felt really good, but then I couldn't do anything the rest of the day. If I would jog or if I would walk, I felt really macho about myself, but I couldn't do anything the rest of the day. So, I devised new ways. I have little dumbbells that I do little things with, little exercise with dumbbells. I do my yoga poses that are very relaxing, and stretching. So, I do a lot of stretching exercises. That's my exercise.

>>**Speaker:** Finding the right exercise mode is more difficult for people with MS because of some of the other problems that they may be experiencing. You may have weakness, you may have balance problems, you may have dizziness. A number of things can interfere with the ability to find a safe, comfortable and convenient exercise program.

The ideal exercise program is the one that you will do, the one that you will stick with and participate in on a regular basis. Exercise needs to be done regularly, meaning several times per week. And if you enjoy doing it, then you'll look forward to doing it and not dread it.

>>**Speaker:** I recommend that all of my patients with multiple sclerosis have pre-participation medical exams prior to beginning an exercise program or significantly changing an exercise program. And there are two reasons for this: First of all, it gives the healthcare professional the opportunity to

evaluate you for any preexisting healthcare problems that you might have that could potentially worsen from an exercise program. And, secondly, it gives your healthcare professional the opportunity to discuss an exercise program with you, give you their support, and also to refer you to a physical therapist that is educated in setting up an exercise program for you.

Depending on the outcome of your physical exam, it's possible that we may want to refer you to another physician or a specialist to evaluate any problems that we feel need to be further evaluated prior to you starting an exercise program.

People with multiple sclerosis should also be seen by a physical therapist to evaluate any other issues they have, such as weakness, mobility problems prior to starting their exercise program.

**>>Speaker:** In the summers I use a pool out back, a little above-ground pool, which I keep kind of -- fairly cool, around 72 or 74 degrees, and in the evenings after work I'll get in the pool. It's like an amazing kind of rejuvenation, almost a reincarnation. I drop body temperature a degree or two by being in cold water for a quarter-hour or half an hour. I come out of the pool and I'm almost -- my girlfriend refers to it as "Jiminy Cricket." I'm much more mobile.

**>>Speaker:** I have a physical therapist every Monday, Wednesday and Friday is the regimen that I'm on now, and we do a lot of exercise, stretching exercises, and also he's got me on some weightbearing exercises, and I pedal a bike there.

**>>Speaker:** Exercise needs to be individually tailored for the people with MS if they have other problems with weakness, or if they're having problems with fatigue. Often a person with MS may start with a stretching exercise program, and that may be enough for them to get started with. Once they have established that and gotten that into their routine, then we look at adding an aerobic exercise program, or an endurance exercise program, something that will use the large muscle groups, pump the blood through the heart and the lungs, and increase their endurance or their aerobic capacity.

Some of the more important criteria may be that you enjoy doing it, that it's available for you to do. It's convenient. It's affordable. If you don't have to

drive a great distance, then it may be more likely that you will actually accomplish that exercise program.

Walking is an exercise program that many people will choose, which is often a healthy choice for exercise. But for people who may have difficulty walking due to other problems from the disease, walking is not a good choice for exercise. If a person with MS has problems with their balance, it may not be safe for them to get on a bicycle and go out in traffic. Often, cycling on a stationary bicycle is a good exercise program for someone, however.

There's a lot of activity that goes into going to a pool for an exercise program. They have to drive there, then they have to get out of the car and get into the facility. Then they have to get from the dressing room out to the water. And then once they've done their exercise program in the water, they have the reversal of that. That work eats up a lot of energy, especially if somebody is already having problems with fatigue.

It's very important for people with MS to be aware that exercise can increase temperature, and if they are heat-sensitive, they may experience an increase in some of their other symptoms as a result of exercising. And if they can manage that increased heat, then they may exercise for longer periods of time without those symptoms irritating them.

Interestingly, some people with MS do not sweat. If people don't sweat, they can have a spray misting bottle, like a plant mister handy, and they can mist themselves. And then with that air moving by from the fan, that can be a very powerful cooling technique. Staying well hydrated is another good way to help manage the fatigue of exercise.

>>**Speaker:** The appropriate frequency of exercising for an aerobic exercise program is usually three to four times per week, or every other day. If people set aside a particular time during the day to do their exercise, they will do their exercise during that time, and then the rest of the day they can be conscientiously conserving energy and not feeling like they have to exercise all the time.

For the general population, the intensity is usually measured according to heart rate, somewhere between the 65 and 85 percent of your maximal heart rate, and that is often monitored by monitoring pulse rate, either a radial pulse or possibly a carotid pulse. For people with MS, the numbness and

tingling in their fingers may make it hard for them to feel the pulse accurately.

Another choice to monitor the intensity of exercise might be using the number of syllables that you can say in one breath. If you can take a breath and count to 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, somewhere between 6, 8 or 10, then you're probably exercising at the right intensity. If you have to take a breath between every two or three syllables, then you're exercising too hard.

For an exercise program to be aerobic, it needs to be continuous and for that length of time that you can tolerate it. If you're doing short walks, for instance, across the parking lot, it's not a long enough period of time to qualify as exercise. It eats into your energy bank, but it doesn't contribute to your fitness.

The appropriate duration of exercise is shorter for people with MS when they're first starting an exercise program, in most instances. Usually people can start with a time of three to five minutes without significantly increasing their symptoms or increasing their fatigue. If they increase that exercise program slowly adding one minute per week or 10 percent per week, they will be able to get to an aerobic duration, but it may take them several months.

**>>Speaker:** The ideal duration of exercise is 25 to 30 minutes three to four times per week. If you have fatigue, we recommend talking with a physical therapist to find a program that is right for you.

**>>Speaker:** I have really struggled with exercising. I know I need to and I want to, but I seem to have failed at everything I've tried to do. I did try going to a gym and that was really difficult by myself. I need someone to maybe put weights on. I've turned over exercise bikes. So, that didn't work. Swimming was another attempt to exercise, but that was a half-a-day project. So, pretty much now I've concluded that I'm really better to exercise in my home, and I do have some equipment at home, just a couple small pieces of equipment. I prefer to exercise at the end of the day, just because then I'm sitting, I'm sort of done for the day.

I started off lifting 1 pound. In fact, it was a can of vegetables or something. And then I got weights and I started using them and lifting, and I got up to being able to lift 50 pounds with one hand. And I never thought I could do

that. And I could lift with my legs 20 pounds. And so I got stronger and stronger and stronger, and it was wonderful.

>>**Speaker:** I do exercise daily, and when I'm feeling that, really, feeling of being slow, like a type of robot feeling, I start to walk and I start slow and then it just energizes my mind and it makes me -- gives me time to keep on going and gives me more energy to continue the day.

>>**Speaker:** I love my yoga class. My yoga class started out as an MS research project for the local university. It was to study the effects of yoga on cognitive issues and MS patients. But the yoga class has continued way beyond the research. We have kept it up, so I go every Thursday to a class of yoga students that are all MS people. It's been the best support group I've ever had for MS. These people are positive, they're interested in their health, they're funny. But we understand each other.

>>**Speaker:** Participating in a structured endurance exercise program will contribute to your improved fitness and increase your energy reserves. To ensure your success in an endurance exercise program, start slowly and gradually increase the amount of time you're exercising, with the goal of 25 to 30 minutes per day, three to four times per week. Use your large muscle groups and monitor your intensity by counting syllables between breaths or other similar techniques.

Don't confuse your daily activities with exercise. Walking across a parking lot, for instance, does not substitute for a structured exercise program or provide the benefits of regular exercise. In addition, be aware that unplanned physically exerting activities may make it difficult for you to achieve high priority activities later in the day.

Scheduling exercise makes it more likely to get accomplished. When your exercise is planned and structured to work with your priorities, you can plan to save energy for your daily activities.

Before you begin a new exercise program or make major changes in your existing program, check with your healthcare provider to see if there are any precautions you should be taking. If you are having trouble finding an exercise program, get help from a physical therapist who can help you find a program that works for you.