

Myths and Facts about Exercise

In the context of persisting pain

1

“I have to do a specific type of exercise.”

There are different types of exercise that achieve different results:

- Range of Motion / Movement exercises improve your ability to move,
- Stretching exercises improve your flexibility and ability to move,
- Strengthening exercises make your muscles stronger,
- Balance exercises improve your balance,
- Aerobic exercises improve your heart and lung health.

HOWEVER, in the context of persistent pain, it is okay to start with any of these. Generally, movement and stretching exercises feel better to start with than strengthening and aerobic, but all are beneficial for pain.

You also don't have to start with “exercises”. **ANY activity where are you moving is beneficial.** This might include walking, gardening, yardwork, household chores.

MOST IMPORTANT thing is that you TOLERATE the exercise

2

“I have to do the exercises a specific number of times to get benefit.”

If we are training for a certain event (like the Olympics), then yes.

In the context of persistent pain, it is more important that we TOLERATE the amount of activity we are doing.

On a good pain day, you may be able to do the exercise a few more times or make the exercise a little harder. Example: completing it 5-10 times, or twice that day

On a bad pain day, you may have to make the exercise a little easier, or not do it as much. Example: completing it 3-5 times, or once that day

You know your body best.

You decide how much to do based on how you are feeling.

Pushing into pain to finish an exercise is NOT beneficial.

3

“No Pain, No Gain’. If I’m not having pain with the exercise, I’m not getting benefit.”

It is okay to feel unpleasant feelings with exercise like:

- Muscle fatigue
- Pulling
- Stretching
- Tightness
- Stiffness
- MILD muscle soreness the next day

You should NEVER feel sharp pain with exercise. Ever.

You may be over-doing an exercise if you feel:

- Trembling or shaking
- Burning
- Muscle cramps
- Significant muscle soreness the next day

If you feel this, try making the exercise easier, doing less, or stopping the exercise.

4

“HOW I do the exercise matters the most.”

Not really.

We used to believe this, but research has shown that it matters less than we think.

Doing an exercise or activity regularly actually matters more!

5

“Exercise requires a large time commitment.”

It doesn't have to.

The research is VERY clear. Doing fewer exercises consistently is better than doing a larger amount infrequently.

Find an exercise or activity that you like and start with 1-5 minutes a day.