

# THE DAILY MOVEMENT

THE RIGHT EXERCISE ADVICE, FROM THE EXPERTS

## EXERCISE AND CHRONIC FATIGUE

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Many Australians experience fatigue, however, 0.3% or roughly 73,800 are diagnosed with chronic fatigue syndrome. It may not seem logical, but exercise is being cited as one of the few beneficial treatments for those with chronic fatigue.

Chronic fatigue is a complex condition and more research is needed to fully understand the mechanisms at play. An exercise intervention normally involves a very graded and carefully constructed plan, that, when executed well, can help people see a light at the end of the tunnel. Coaching and planning important variables like exercise type, intensity and volume as well as accounting for recovery is very important when exercising with fatigue. The idea that more is better is definitely not going to be helpful. Rather, understanding the "boom-bust" nature of our energy levels and performing just the right amount to avoid a "crash" is imperative.

How exactly can exercise help you?

1. Build tolerance and resiliency to daily activities
2. Reduced fatigue symptoms over time.
3. Improved sleep hygiene.
4. Give a sense of control over the condition

We understand that the thought of exercising may seem daunting. You most likely have more questions than answers. What type of exercise should I do? How do I get started? In this issue of The Daily Movement, we endeavour to answer your questions by delving deeper into the types of exercise that are most effective, plus some helpful tips to get you going.

### DID YOU KNOW??

Consistency pays dividends for years to come.

Making small changes each day, week and month all add up to some very large improvements over a longer period of time. By remaining consistent we too avoid periods of 'falling off the wagon'. A month of rest compared to a month of continued exercise can show significant differences in physical function and ability

### TRUE OR FALSE?

- 1 When you are feeling fatigued the only thing to do is rest.
- 2 Active treatments (e.g. exercise, mindfulness, diet, managing stress) should play a large role in a treatment plan.
- 3 There is no, one size fits all approach to chronic fatigue.

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OUT THE ANSWERS



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## WHAT EXERCISE AND WHY

Your current fitness level and intensity of symptoms will provide guidance around the most appropriate type of exercise. Resistance training will be beneficial in improving strength and endurance for daily tasks. Its beneficial to target the major muscle groups with whole-body movements. Ensure you have sufficient rest in between exercises. Both land and water-based aerobic training have shown to improve cardiovascular fitness as well as help general fatigue. It's important to start light and never take on large increases of load or intensity. When managing fatigue, the analogy of a "bucket" of energy is used. A balance of activities that deplete the bucket (exercise, work, socialising ect) must be balanced with activities that full the bucket (rest, good sleep patterns and nourishing food ect). A full lifestyle approach must be accepted for the best outcome to be achieved.

### Resistance Training



Resistance training involves activities like lifting weights or using your own body weight as leverage to stress your muscles.

### Aerobic Training



This is the type of exercise that will get you huffing and puffing. Think things such as a brisk walk and cycling

### Flexibility training



Refers to stretching, these movements can be both static or movement based. This helps keep our joints moving as they should.



## YOUR CHECKLIST FOR A PERFECT LIFESTYLE AND EXERCISE PLAN

- Keep a fatigue diary.
- Plan your weekly exercise efforts in considering of other competing priorities.
- Monitor exercise volume and intensity and only ever increase in very small increments.
- Form a weekly plan of WHEN and WHAT exercise will occur. Make sure you schedule rest and recovery.
- If further guidance is needed or you are not seeing the results you expect, see an Accredited Exercise Physiologist.

## TIPS FOR GETTING STARTED

- ✓ Start small and build up. By making small changes and incorporating regular, purposeful exercise into your daily routine, you will reap the benefits for years to come.
- ✓ Keep a fatigue diary. Tracking things like your workload, social activities, daily movement, sleep patterns and energy levels can give you important insights into your current capacities and can be helpful when planning your routines..
- ✓ If you are experiencing a period of heightened fatigue, you will benefit from modifying your activity by reducing the intensity or duration, rather than excluding it altogether. Make sure you account for your energy levels and allow adequate recovery.



## TRUE OR FALSE ?

- 1 False.** Rest is important however too much can lead to deconditioning and worsening fatigue. Regular exercise is an essential aspect in the treatment of chronic fatigue to maintain and improve tolerance levels to daily tasks.
- 2 True.** Passive treatments such as massage can be great at providing short term relief of symptoms. However, to promote long term improvements and prevent reliance on expensive passive treatments, it is essential to incorporate an active approach to your treatment.
- 3 True.** Every person experiences chronic fatigue symptoms differently. While there are certain guidelines around what is most appropriate, it is not an exact science and can be a team effort between family, friends and medical professionals.