

What You Should Know About Wheelchair Exercise and Fitness for the Disabled

Sitting in a wheelchair for long periods of time can cause annoying restlessness and be quite uncomfortable for those persons who are disabled. It's important to keep the body moving and make exercise in your wheelchair a daily part of your fitness program, regardless of your disability. Wheelchair exercise will help increase strength, flexibility, improve mobility, strengthen the heart and lungs, and help control weight. Before any exercise session, it's always a good idea to warm up, stretch and cool down for about ten minutes before and after workouts. Start slowly and work up to more weight and then to more challenging exercises. An upper body workout would include exercises for the arms, torso, neck, and shoulders. Everyone, depending on the disability, has a unique situation, so consult with your doctor first to determine which exercises are better for you. There are two basic types of wheelchair exercise that will be important to know for your workout -- resistance training and strength training. The first type of wheelchair exercise is resistance training. It uses large, stretchy rubber bands called resistance bands. Wrap the bands securely around a door, pole, arm of your wheelchair, or other stable object. Now pull the bands towards you or away from you to work your muscles. You can use the bands to do arm and leg extensions, shoulder rotations and pull downs. The second type of wheelchair exercise is strength training. This is done by lifting free weights or dumbbells. If you don't have free weights or dumbbells you can use cans of food. Look around. Weigh them if you can. Start with 1-2 pound weights and work up slowly. Lift while you are watching TV if you like. The benefits of strength training include the ability to perform daily activities, like pushing wheelchairs, carrying items and transferring. Many wheelchair users have an inefficient 'push' and strengthening the muscles involved will greatly help. If resistance training or strength training is impossible for some reason or if you would like to supplement it, get a video or DVD that is especially for keeping fit and exercising while one is in a sitting position. Remember to always keep a positive attitude. Use discipline to get into a regular exercise and fitness program you've created for yourself and continue to do it. Set goals and rewards for yourself. Don't do anything you know you shouldn't. Start slowly. Keep your eye on the end result. A good fitness and wheelchair exercise program, regardless of the disability, can significantly improve your health and increase mobility for you and others who are disabled.

About the Author

Regular exercises to restore the strength of your back and a gradual return to. This guide can help you better understand your exercise.

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