

The Benefits of Exercise for People Who Suffer From Parkinson's Disease

Many sufferers of Parkinson's disease quickly find that various aspects of their life are no longer controllable in the way that they used to be however by exercising regularly Parkinson sufferers can continue to control their gross movements i.e. walking, holding objects etc. for longer which adds a mental and emotional boost to their wellbeing. Research has shown that exercise may also improve the synthesis of dopamine in the brain and increase the levels of neurotrophic factors which are beneficial compounds. Exercise for people diagnosed with Parkinson's disease incorporates muscle strengthening, flexibility and toning activities so that muscles and joints stay flexible and strong. It is normal for a physiotherapist to implement an exercise schedule for the patient that includes a range of activities to work all muscles of the body over a two or three day period. So for example, day one of the cycle may include walking and strengthening exercises for the arms and hands whereas day two might be a yoga class where flexibility of the joints is the main focus. It is essential to monitor the patient's progress, not only so that any improvements and decreases in function are recorded but also as a stimulus for the patient; when people see improvement and can visualise the effort that they put in they are much more positive about continuing the regime. In general exercise should test the entire body and not just the limbs so that posture and movement is maintained for as long as possible. Good posture is essential in the later stages of Parkinson's disease because stooping can hamper breathing and swallowing. Exercises for posture include callisthenics, yoga, Pilates, tai chi, and swimming however not every sufferer will enjoy these types of activities. Simply sitting upright while reading a book or watching TV and walking with a straight back will also help though, thus walking the dog or playing with the children or grandchildren are great ways to work the body muscles and to enjoy daily exercising. Regular exercise for the Parkinson's sufferer will reduce the incidence of muscle cramps, rigidity of the joints and the aches and pains associated with staying still for long periods of time. Also, because exercise helps the sufferer to maintain control over many of their gross movements (although maybe not the tremors) it gives them a heightened sense of achievement and so stress and anxiety levels remain low. Keeping a positive mental attitude is incredibly important in conditions like Parkinson's disease where sufferer can very easily become frustrated and discouraged with their predicament. As with all exercise routines, the patient should start with a good warm up followed by the exercise activity of their choice or which has been scheduled for that day, and then they should finish with a positive cool down so that the chances of developing muscle cramps and injuries are greatly reduced. An exercise session should ideally last around 15-20 minutes and should not by any means exhaust the patient. Overexertion can be equally as damaging to a Parkinson's sufferer as no exercise at all. In order to make daily exercise more appealing and less of a chore it may be worth trying to find a friend or relative that is willing to exercise with the patient. Also, a bit of variety in the type of exercise will not only mean that the exercise stays interesting but it will also ensure that all muscles and joints of the body are used to a satisfactory level.

About the Author

The exercise stress test is a useful screening tool for the detection of. The clinical competence to perform exercise stress testing.

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