

Getting started

There is no right or wrong exercise, but there are some simple guidelines to help you decide what suits you best.

You have to learn to listen to your own body and to be honest with what it is telling you. If you try an activity and it does not make your symptoms worse, then it is most likely to be fine for you. Some people have a misguided belief that if you push hard enough and it hurts then it must be doing some good. If you spend more time recovering from an activity than doing it, you may not have the balance quite right!

It is important to find exercise that you enjoy doing because then you will keep it going. Everyone is individual and some people like to exercise in a group setting - in a class or as part of a team. Others like to work individually whether that is at the gym, swimming pool or at home. Find what is right for you.

The exercises

The exercises have been divided up into different categories such as starting position or problems they help address. This may help you to decide which ones are appropriate for you and how to fit them in with your daily activities.

For instance, you may want to pick a standing exercise to do when standing in the kitchen waiting for the kettle to boil or before you wash up. Or you may pick a sitting exercise to do when at the table before you have your meal or while watching the television. If you just want to keep an eye on your posture rather than developing a keep fit routine there are exercises to help.

In the beginning you might consider enlisting help from a physiotherapist who will be able to give you some tips and pointers as to which exercises best meet your needs. If you work with a fitness instructor it is important that they are aware that you may need to work at a slightly slower pace or maybe with more frequent breaks.

Starting your programme

When you start your programme, pick out a couple that you know you will be able to do and build up gradually. At first you could pick maybe two exercises and do them every day at least once - perhaps in the morning and in the afternoon.

Then pick a day in the week and a good time in the day. Select a few more different exercises and go through a longer programme. There's no point in setting your target so high that you will not be able to reach it.

You may find you can do more repetitions of each exercise but it is sensible to start with a low number and build up gradually. When you want to increase the number of exercises only add one or two repetitions for at least three days before you do anything more. Make

sure you check how you feel - especially for signs of increased fatigue - before challenging yourself further.

It may be that you need to have someone to help you, so you may need to time your exercises to coincide with their being around.

Finally, when you are exercising, it's important to breathe! A lot of people hold their breath when they exercise and that's not a good idea!

When you have finished, make sure you rest.