

Benefits outweigh the risks: A consensus statement on the risks of physical activity for people living with long-term conditions

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Introduction

People with long-term conditions (LTCs) benefit greatly from being physically active, but experience many barriers to engaging in physical activity (PA), including fear of exacerbating symptoms.



Methods

- Rapid literature review
- Steering group workshop
- >> development of draft symptom and syndrome-based statements
- >> 3-stage online Delphi study (n=28 experts)
- All proposed statements achieved consensus (agreement: 88.5-96.5%)



1. The benefits outweigh the risks

Physical activity is safe, even for people living with symptoms from multiple medical conditions.



2. The risk of adverse events is very low but that's not how people feel

Well informed conversations with healthcare professionals can reassure people who are fearful of their condition worsening, and further reduce this risk.



3. It's not as easy as just telling someone to move more

Be aware of the concerns of individuals and their carers to help build confidence



4. Everyone has their own starting point.

Help people identify their own starting point, begin there and build up gradually.



5. Stop and seek medical review if...

You notice a dramatic increase in breathlessness, new or worsening chest pain and/or increasing GTN requirement, a sudden onset of rapid palpitations or irregular heartbeat, dizziness, a reduction in exercise capacity or sudden change in vision.



8 Symptom-based statements:

- discuss specific risks for:
- (1) musculoskeletal pain, (2) fatigue, (3) shortness of breath, (4) cardiac chest pain, (5) palpitations, (6) dysglycaemia, (7) cognitive impairment and (8) falls and frailty.

Conclusion

- ✓ Clear, consistent messaging on risk needed to support people with LTCs to engage in PA.
- ✓ Pre-participation medical clearance for people with stable LTCs is not necessary
- ✓ People with specific concerns about their LTC and symptoms may require guidance for PA