

IT'S EASIER THAN YOU THINK

You may feel physical activity is too difficult. Here are some possible barriers and ways to overcome them

NO TIME:

- Make an action plan (see previous page)
- Be physically active with your family and friends
- Got down time? Make it physical activity time

PHYSICAL BARRIERS:

- Physical activity may reduce your pain
- It's worth it. You'll feel energized
- There's a way! Proper adaptation of equipment and activity can accommodate you

LACK OF SUPPORT/LACK OF ACCESS

- Get an exercise buddy
- Connect with your community recreation centre or municipal recreation department
- Use resources: SCI Action Canada's Get In Motion Service, the Canadian Wheelchair Sports Association's Bridging the Gap Program, Active Living Alliance, Canadian Paraplegic Association, the Canadian Paralympic Committee Portal.
- Try an exercise video such as the Active Homes videos available on the SCI Action Canada website

"I CAN'T"

- Start with what you know and build your skills
- Take a tour of a facility that offers an activity that interests you
- Too expensive? There are a number of community-based programs that have adapted equipment available for you to use in their activities.



BE ACTIVE... SAFELY

Here are some practical and important tips to avoid injury

- Always check with a physician before starting a physical activity program.
- Progress slowly. You are aiming for a little muscle soreness, not intense pain.
- Check your skin for pressure sores/ulcers. If this is a concern, try shifting your weight every 10-15 minutes. Consider equipping your chair with a special cushion to relieve pressure.
- Stay cool. Since sweating may be inhibited below the level of injury, spray yourself regularly with a water bottle when exercising in the heat. If indoors, use a fan as well.
- Know the signs and symptoms of autonomic dysreflexia (AD). If you think you are experiencing AD, remain sitting up. If you deal with the suspected cause and symptoms don't go away, call a physician.

Visit the [SCI Action Canada website](http://www.sciactioncanada.ca) for more safety tips.



YOU ARE NOT ALONE!

SCI Action Canada's website has resources to connect you. QLog allows you to read how SCI Action Canada Community Members lead active lifestyles. Facebook and Twitter provide social networking opportunities. Go to www.sciactioncanada.ca.

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SCI GET FIT TOOLKIT



A CANADIAN RESOURCE TO HELP ADULTS WITH SPINAL CORD INJURY MEET PHYSICAL ACTIVITY GUIDELINES



Experts recommend that all healthy adults with spinal cord injury set aside time to be physically active. This part of your day should be enjoyable, so choose activities that you like to do, and make it fun.

Try to incorporate both:

- 1 - AEROBIC ACTIVITY
- 2 - STRENGTHENING ACTIVITY

GUIDELINES AT A

GLANCE

FOR IMPORTANT FITNESS BENEFITS, ADULTS WITH A SPINAL CORD INJURY SHOULD ENGAGE IN:

- At least 20 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity AEROBIC activity 2 times per week, AND
- 3 sets of 8-10 repetitions of STRENGTHENING activity for each muscle group 2 times per week.

AIM FOR:

AEROBIC ACTIVITY

From Moderate to Vigorous.

Moderate means somewhat hard, and you feel like you could continue for a long time. You can talk, but not sing your favourite song, during the activity. Using a 0 to 10 scale, moderate-intensity physical activity is usually a 5 or 6.

Vigorous is really hard, and you feel like you can only continue for a short time before getting tired. You will not be able to say more than a few words without pausing for a breath. Using a 0 to 10 scale, vigorous-intensity physical activity is usually a 7 or 8.

ACTIVITY IDEAS

Wheeling, arm cycling, sports, swimming

STRENGTHENING ACTIVITY

You should feel quite challenged (without hurting yourself) by the end of the 3 sets. Take a 1-2 minute rest break between each set. Work each muscle group on alternate days.



Free weights, elastic resistance bands, cable pulleys, weight machines

If you are newly injured, are pregnant, prone to autonomic dysreflexia, or have other medical conditions, you should talk to your health professional to find out what types and amount of physical activity are right for you. A health professional might include a doctor, a physiotherapist, or a qualified exercise professional.

For a more detailed look at the guidelines and how you can get started, go to www.sciactioncanada.ca

ACTIVITY EXAMPLES

Not sure how to get active? There are plenty of activities to choose from, both for indoors and out. Try to find a mix of exercises that work different body parts and blend aerobic and strengthening activities. Above all, make sure you choose activities you enjoy, and that are safe for you. Here are some suggestions to get you started.

MANUAL CHAIR

Aerobic activities

- Wheel for fun and endurance
- Cycle using a hand cycle or stationary bike
- Swim
- Play catch with your kids
- Follow along with an exercise video
- Play basketball

MANUAL CHAIR

Strengthening activities

- Build strength with a resistance band
- Lift weights. Don't have any? Use cans or water bottles from the kitchen
- Use cable pulleys

POWER CHAIR

Aerobic activities

- Play bocce
- Swim with assistance
- Use an arm ergometer
- Do standing frame exercises
- Dance
- Curl

POWER CHAIR

Strengthening activities

- Use cable pulleys
- Exercise with a resistance band
- Practise yoga, Pilates or Tai Chi for relaxation and to build balance and strength



WHEELCHAIR SPORTS

What grabs your fancy? There are so many SCI-adapted sports! Here are a few to choose from:

Sailing, rugby, basketball, tennis, sit skiing, sledge hockey.

There is adapted equipment and organized activities available for a number of other sports. Try out some different sports and see what you like.



LOOKING FOR A SPORTS CLUB OR PLACE TO BE ACTIVE?

Use the Canadian Paralympic Committee's Get Involved Portal. Go to www.paralympic.ca and click on "Find a Club".

BENEFITS OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Physical activity is fun, and there is more good news! Research shows that following the guidelines improves aerobic fitness and strength.

Here are some benefits you can expect:

- Better endurance so that you can wheel for longer
- Easier transfers in and out of your chair
- Enhanced self-care and mobility
- Better overall health and quality of life
- More energy
- More social interaction with others

Being active can have other benefits:

- Less pain
- Lower risk of stress
- Lower risk of depression
- Reduced cholesterol and fats in your blood, which can lower your risk of developing several chronic diseases
- Improved ability to regulate blood glucose, decreasing your risk for type II diabetes
- Better sleep quality

To see the research evidence supporting these benefits, go to the [SCI Action Canada website](http://www.sciactioncanada.ca).

MAKE YOUR OWN

ACTION PLAN

Scientific studies have found that people are far more likely to be physically active if they make a realistic and detailed plan.

Your Action Plan can be set up as a weekly calendar. Take advantage of technology to keep you on track. For instance, if you use a smart phone, program in reminders. Include in your Action Plan what activity you are going to do, where, when, with whom, for how long, and at what intensity. Have fun, and be sure to choose activities you like!

Below is an example Action Plan. You can substitute activities on the chart with one you enjoy more. So instead of wheeling, try another aerobic activity such as cycling. Instead of resistance band exercises, lift weights or soup cans. The point is to incorporate physical activity into your day for fitness and fun.

EXAMPLE ACTION PLAN:

	SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
Activity	frisbee/catch with kids	off	resistance band	off	go for a hike	off	off
Where?	park or backyard		home		trail		
When?	2 pm		8 am		7 pm		
How long?	10 min.		10 min.		10-15 min.		
Intensity	moderate		moderate		moderate		

Once you are enjoying regular physical activity, gradually add in some intensity for further fitness benefits. For more information and examples of how to write an Action Plan, go to www.sciactioncanada.ca.



NEED HELP GETTING STARTED? LOOKING FOR EQUIPMENT? WANT SOME COACHING?

Get in Motion is a free physical activity counseling service for Canadians with SCI. Call 1-866-678-1966 or Go to www.sciactioncanada.ca



LOOKING FOR MORE STRENGTH-TRAINING IDEAS?

Check out the Active Homes resource manuals and instructional videos on the SCI Action Canada website. Click on "Active Homes" under the "Physical Activity Resources" tab to download a copy of the manuals and the videos.

How to make your plan "STICKY"

Need help actually sticking to your Action Plan? Here are three tactics to try so that you don't talk yourself out of doing your planned activity:

- Use Action Cues. Cues are triggers for a planned behaviour. For instance, if you are planning to go for a swim after work, place your goggles beside your computer.
- Focus on the first stage of getting ready. If you've set your alarm clock and planned a morning activity, but you're losing motivation because of all that's involved, just focus on dressing appropriately and getting out the door... the rest will fall into place!
- Make exercise plans with others. They will be your conscience and you will motivate each other!

WHAT'S STOPPING YOU?
You may have barriers to becoming physically active. Turn to the next page to learn about proven strategies to help you cope.

