

fitness pyramid

for people with chronic pain, fatigue, or weakness

You used to be fit! Now you're concerned you can't be.

- You may have physical difficulties that make it hard to function.
- You may not have supportive friends or family who will help.
- You may have financial barriers and concerns about safety or security.

But you know that if you become inactive, your problems will get worse!

Here is a "fitness pyramid" - similar to the "food pyramid" - with suggestions for maintaining your fitness despite these special circumstances.

Basic guidelines:

1. **Schedule it!** Write out a routine, post it where you can see it, and stick to it!
2. **Deadline it!** Have a realistic goal for each activity. Set a deadline for when you will achieve it.
3. **Track it!** Keep a list of your goals and the dates you achieved them.

LIMIT*:

Watching tv
Video games
Surfing the internet

2 times weekly: attend classes /groups

YMCA or fitness center (swim, dance, yoga).
Organize a weekly group: cards, boardgames, crafts.
Support/ discussion/ therapy group, at hospital or clinic.
Religious study group, bookstore reading group, art class.

3 times weekly: be creative/sensual

Paint, draw, work with clay, whittle.
Do needlework, leatherwork, fly-tying.
Play an instrument, sing along to music.
Groom animals, give a massage, self-apply lotion.

4 times weekly: out of the house- become "a regular"

Church/ temple.
Mall-walk or -roll.
Library and bookstores.
Zoo/aquarium/museum/planetarium.
Coffee shop/diner: get to know the servers.
Browse farmer's market, craft store, nursery, hobby shop, pet store, health-food store, art supply store...
(you don't have to buy, to browse.)

5 times weekly: strengthening/ flexibility

1. **Weightlifting** at home (soup cans, rubber bands, squeeze balls, etc.).
2. **Stretching**/ range-of-motion exercises (use a broomstick and/or scarf; include head rolls & facial-expression exercises).
3. **High-repetition** bodybuilding: single-leg lifts; wall or armchair pushups; abdominal crunches in bed; tiptoe flex/ extensions.
4. **Balance**/ equilibrium: sit on a balance ball; stand on one foot; arm/hand exercises with a beach ball.

Every single day:

1. **Walk your dog**, even if you don't have a dog; take an "evening constitutional" stroll after dinner.
2. **Go to the mailbox** as a separate trip (or go to the end of the driveway, or the back of the yard).
3. **Park far away** from store/church/library entrance (plan ahead, so you are not in a hurry).
4. **Take stairs** instead of elevator, if possible (*stop and rest* as many times as you need, to be comfortable).
5. **Do kegels** whenever you use bathroom (stop and start the flow several times by squeezing internal muscles).

fitness plan summary:

Limit TV and recreational computer*.

2 times a week: class/ group.

3 times a week: creative/musical.

4 times a week: out of the house.

5 times a week: home exercise.

Every day: walks and kegels!

****How?*** What does "limit" mean?

1. Have a "Plan A" (**one** game or movie **OR** update your webpage/ check email **OR** research a topic, etc.).
2. Set a **timer** (alarm clock, cellphone alarm, or stove timer) for **when that activity will end**.
3. Have a "Plan B" (what you'll do **after** that activity - example, go for a walk, read the paper, writing, hot bath, etc.).

youtube how-to videos

The internet addresses have been shortened to make them easier to type in.
Check off the videos you'd like to watch again in the future.

Introduction to fitness for people with chronic pain, fatigue, or weakness:

- <http://bit.ly/d4dGkj>
- <http://bit.ly/b0mjeL>
- <http://bit.ly/bmyoeQ>
(in several parts, including exercises)

Strengthening:

- <http://bit.ly/a8RTvs>
- <http://bit.ly/d2cGos>

Chair exercises:

- <http://bit.ly/BKteH>
- <http://bit.ly/c2OLXy>
- <http://bit.ly/adsYJL>

How to use a balance ball/ therapy ball (from beginner to advanced):

- <http://bit.ly/bWGjWk>

How to use an inversion table (normal person - not an advertisement!):

- <http://bit.ly/bgoa4Q>
- <http://bit.ly/bvjuWm> (table-free kitchen-counter inversion)

Balance and agility exercises:

- <http://bit.ly/a4FpXd>
- <http://bit.ly/9bnlcp> (this man with Parkinson's disease has many good short videos)
- <http://bit.ly/dn0fyY>

Beginners yoga for limited mobility:

- <http://bit.ly/9ZGovz>
- <http://bit.ly/csJ9Tk>
- <http://bit.ly/aAFa32>
- <http://bit.ly/abHlan>
- <http://bit.ly/ccgWdY>
- <http://bit.ly/910ZSn> (pajama yoga!)

Yoga for low back pain:

- <http://bit.ly/cxvXMk>

Laughter yoga:

- <http://bit.ly/ddQ8wi>

Inspiration: "my 89-year-old Polish mother doing her daily exercises"

- <http://bit.ly/cYHn73>