

Huntington's Disease Aerobic and Resistance Training Fact Sheet

Why is aerobic and resistance training important in Huntington's disease?

It is important for persons with Huntington's disease (HD) to take part in aerobic exercise (exercise that makes you breathe harder) along with upper and lower body strengthening. This will improve fitness and stabilize or improve physical function. Taking part in regular aerobic and strength training may improve your ability to walk longer distances (endurance) and move about throughout the day (physical activity).

What is the role of the physiotherapist?

A physiotherapist is a movement specialist who can prescribe an individualized plan of exercise.

What types of individuals with HD benefit from exercise?

Most research has been focused on individuals with early to middle stage HD.

For those with balance challenges:

- Stationary biking should be considered to reduce falls while still allowing for intensive aerobic exercise.
- Resistance training (for example using weights) may need to be adapted or supervised by an exercise professional or trained care partner to ensure safety.

Aerobic and resistance training may also benefit those who have early signs or symptoms of HD, or those who haven't developed symptoms yet.

What kinds of Aerobic Exercise Can I do?

- Consider cycling, treadmill walking, overground walking or arm cycling
- Work up to 30-45 minutes/session, 3-4 times per week
- You want to be working at a moderate to high intensity level. Your physiotherapist can help you identify a safe intensity level.










What kinds of resistance training can I do?

Consider strength training for all major muscle groups including arms, legs, abdominal muscles and back muscles.

You can use weight machines, resistance bands, free weights or bodyweight exercises.

Your physiotherapist can recommend a series of exercises to focus on as you work up to 30-60 minutes/session. The recommended commitment is 3 times per week, you might consider focusing on legs/abdominals on some days and arms/back on other days, for example.

How often should I perform aerobic and resistance training?

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						
						

Additional Information

Persons with HD may benefit from long-duration aerobic and resistance training programs. Some studies evaluated benefits of programs as long as 9 months in both center-based and home-based environments.

Setting up a regular aerobic and resistance training program should be a goal when focusing on prevention of future movement problems, even in the pre-manifest stage.

You should work with a physiotherapist who can ensure safe engagement in moderate to high intensity exercise.

Resources

Videos of exercises and activities can be found at:

<https://eurohuntington.org/active-huntingtons/>

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCH7_ed2_mkzXNWPZqVlosw

<https://u.osu.edu/mend/move-to-improve/>