

The Takeaway

For patients with thalassemia, exercise is incredibly important. It functions to keep the mind and body healthy, and may combat several illnesses frequently seen in aging patients with thalassemia.

Don't wait until you have the energy to exercise; a regular exercise routine will give you energy, and start you on the way to numerous life-long benefits. Identify possible exercise routines and beginning them early in life is very beneficial to your health.

An easy first step is to look online for parks or bike paths in your area, and if any look nice, take a short walk. Finding places where you can exercise with a friend or family member will make the activity much easier, and promote further physical activity. Who knows, it might even become a family routine.

Happy Exercising!



For more information on exercise requirements, visit:

<https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity>

For more information on exercise and its importance for patients with thalassemia, please visit our website:

<http://www.thalassemia.com>



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Exercise

*An Informational Pamphlet
for Patients with Thalassemia*



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Why is Exercise Important?

Exercise can have pronounced physical effect. In general, it serves to increase:

- Bone Strength
- Muscle Strength
- Cardiovascular Ability

While the muscular and skeletal results of exercise are important, exercise has also been shown to benefit the mind. It has been found to:

- Improve Sleep
- Aid in Stress Relief
- Increase Energy
- Maintain Healthy Weight
- Improve Self-Esteem

With those positive effects in mind, research has found that exercise is exceedingly important for individuals with thalassemia. Many people with thalassemia do not meet the recommendations for daily physical activity, which results in decreased bone strength, increased fatigue, and lower overall food intake.

Through a regimented exercise routine, a patient with thalassemia may combat many of the other illnesses associated with thalassemia such as diabetes, osteoporosis, and by extension nutritional deficits created by a lack of nutrient-rich food. Especially as patients transition from adolescence to adult life, the benefits of exercise will further increase by mediating the age-related diseases.

What Constitutes Exercise

Exercise is defined as any activity that requires physical exertion. This can include aerobic activities such as running, biking, walking, swimming or rowing, bone strengthening activities, or weight bearing exercises.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) gives a list of moderate and light-intensity exercises, which can include:

Aerobic Exercises:

- Brisk Walking
- Swimming
- Riding a Bicycle
- House and Yard Work
- Playing Physically Intense Games Such as Baseball, Softball, or Basketball

Bone Strengthening Exercises:

- Hopping, Skipping, or Jumping
- Jogging or Running
- Yoga

Light Intensity Activities:

- Walking Slowly
- Washing Dishes
- Gardening

Moderate Intensity Activities:

- Tennis
- Dancing
- Boxing

For those with frequent fatigue or pain, light and moderate intensity activities are the most effective forms of exercise. Individuals who can tolerate intensive exercise, such as vigorous sprinting or weight lifting, should do so.

How Much Exercise Do I Need to Do?

For children, the CDC recommends 60+ minutes of aerobic activity per day, in addition to extra bone and muscle strengthening activities.

For adults, the CDC advises a minimum of 150 minutes of moderate activity (such as brisk walking) every week, in addition to further muscle strengthening exercises such as lifting weights.

Guidelines like these may not be feasible for all patients with thalassemia. If you experience abnormal pain or discomfort while exercising, talk to a physician about how you can minimize discomfort while continuing your physical activity. The important thing is to be doing what you can, when you can. Even a little light to moderate exercise every day may, over an extended period of time, drastically reduce overall risk of bone fractures or osteoporosis, in addition to increasing physical and emotional health.

When you are seeking places to engage in physical activity, consider your local gym, park, bike paths, or regional nature reserve. You may also consider investing in home workout equipment if going outside is too much of a time investment. During the search for a suitable outdoor area, consider asking friends and family to join you; exercising with friends has been shown to promote long-term adherence to an exercise routine.

