

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS: EXERCISES AND HEMOPHILIA

What kinds of exercises should people with hemophilia do?

Exercise, like medicine, works best when there has been a complete assessment done by a trained professional, and specific exercises have been chosen that suit the individual's goals and ability. People with hemophilia should visit a physical therapist at their local hemophilia treatment centre for an assessment and guidance on exercises best suited to their circumstances.

How is exercise beneficial to people with hemophilia?

Exercise is important for building healthy bones and strengthening the muscles that support joints. Exercises help counteract the long-term effects of joint and muscle bleeding and the tendency among people with hemophilia who have had many bleeds to develop abnormal postures. Specific exercises help improve or restore joint range of motion and strength, and muscle length and strength.

How can people with hemophilia know what exercises are right for them?

There are many exercise programs available, but programs should be approached with caution. Exercises are selected for different purposes at different times during recovery periods and depending on the individuals' abilities. A proper assessment of muscle and joint function by a skilled physical therapist is very important before an exercise program is selected. The right muscles and joints must be trained in the right way. The exercise program should then be supervised and advanced carefully by the same physical therapist.

How frequently should people with hemophilia exercise?

The number of exercises and repetitions depends on each situation. The individual and the therapist must listen to the signals from the body – discomfort usually means enough for that session. If a new pain begins during exercising, it is very important that it be analysed carefully to determine if the pain is muscle fatigue, a sign of a new bleed, or due to excess strain on a damaged joint.

Should people without access to treatment avoid exercise?

Many people are afraid to try exercises or to prescribe all but the most basic exercises if factor (clotting factor concentrate, cryoprecipitate, plasma) is not readily available. The WFH guide *Exercises for People with Hemophilia* provides exercise progressions in levels of difficulty from least difficult to more strenuous. If the principles and warnings given in the guide are observed, lack of treatment products should not deter people from beginning an exercise program.

Adapted from the WFH publication Exercises for People with Hemophilia (2006) by Kathy Mulder