

Longitudinal cohort study of people aging with long-term physical disability

Exercise and Social Participation

Background

Exercise can improve health and participation for both people with disabilities and older adults, but it has not been explored in depth for people who are aging with long-term physical disabilities. Therefore, we looked at data on exercise from our longitudinal cohort study on health and participation for this population.



About the Study

We surveyed 474 people aged 45–65 with a long-term physical disability (5 years or more) every year for 3 years. For this study, we looked at their responses to questions about:

- Demographics
Age, gender, race, income, education
- Health factors
Length of time with disability, number of additional health conditions
- Exercise
Whether they exercise, satisfaction with how often they exercise, what would help them improve their satisfaction
- Symptoms
Pain, fatigue, depression
- Self-efficacy
- Ability to participate in social roles and activities
- Satisfaction with participation in social roles and activities



Results

Participants who reported exercising

58.6%



Participants who wanted to exercise more

63%

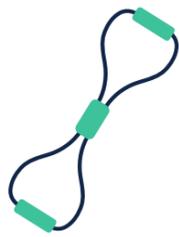


Participants who exercised had:

- ↓ Less pain
- ↓ Less fatigue
- ↓ Less depression
- ↑ Greater self-efficacy
- ↑ Greater ability to participate in social roles/activities
- ↑ Greater satisfaction with participation in social roles/activities



What participants in both groups (exercisers and non-exercisers) said would enable them to exercise more:



- Better health
- Personal assistance
- Environmental modifications
- Assistive technology
- Knowledgeable instructors
- Facilities (e.g., access to a pool for low-impact exercise, availability of accessible gyms)

Conclusions

Many people aging with disabilities want to exercise more, and those who do exercise have better health and greater social participation. Future studies should explore the effects of exercise on mental health and how exercise programs might improve participation for people aging with disabilities.