

Exercise for Recovering Alcoholics and Addicts Introduction

Starting an exercise program can be an excellent complement to sobriety, as physical activity helps reduce stress, improve mood, and rebuild physical health. For someone recovering from alcoholism, it's important to create a balanced plan that considers their physical and emotional needs during this transition. Here's some advice:

1. Focus on Small, Manageable Goals

- **Start slow:** Avoid overly ambitious goals that could lead to frustration or burnout. Begin with short walks, light yoga, or simple stretching exercises.
- Celebrate progress: Even small steps (e.g., a 10-minute walk) are significant achievements.

2. Choose Activities You Enjoy

- Enjoyable exercises increase the likelihood of sticking with the program. Explore activities like dancing, hiking, swimming, or group sports.
- Experiment to find what feels good physically and emotionally.

3. Consider Group Exercise for Support

- Join group classes, walking groups, or sports teams. The social aspect can help combat feelings of isolation that often accompany recovery.
- If possible, find sober-friendly fitness groups or recovery-focused programs like **Phoenix** (a nonprofit focused on fitness for people in recovery).

4. Use Exercise to Relieve Cravings

- Physical activity can help manage cravings by releasing endorphins, the “feel-good” chemicals in the brain, which can reduce the need for alcohol as a mood booster.

5. Prioritize Hydration and Nutrition

- Alcoholism often leads to dehydration and nutrient deficiencies. Pair your exercise program with a focus on drinking water and eating balanced meals to support recovery. See NUTRITION TAB.

6. Listen to Your Body

- If your body feels weak or overly fatigued (common in early sobriety), take rest days as needed.
- Avoid overexertion—it's okay to take breaks and build endurance gradually.

7. Practice Mind-Body Connection

- Incorporate activities like yoga, tai chi, or meditation that promote mindfulness. These practices can help you reconnect with your body and emotions. See ***MEDITATIONS TAB.***

8. Use Exercise as a Tool for Structure

- Create a regular schedule for workouts to establish routine and consistency in your daily life. This structure is especially important during recovery.

9. Seek Professional Guidance

- Work with a trainer, physical therapist, or even a doctor if you have physical limitations from alcohol use or related health issues (e.g., liver damage, malnutrition, or joint pain).
- Consult a counselor or support group to ensure your exercise plan aligns with your sobriety goals.

10. Stay Patient and Kind to Yourself

- Understand that recovery is a journey, and building a new lifestyle takes time. Don't pressure yourself to "fix everything" all at once.
- Use exercise as a way to celebrate your progress, not punish yourself for past behavior.