

Schizophrenia: Regular exercise guidelines still apply

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Regular exercise can play an important a role in improving the physical and mental wellbeing of individuals with schizophrenia, according to a review published in The *Cochrane Library*. Following a systematic review of the most up-to-date research on exercise in schizophrenia, researchers concluded that the current guidelines for exercise should be followed by people with schizophrenia just as they should by the general population.

"Current guidelines for exercise appear to be just as acceptable to individuals with [schizophrenia](#) in terms of potential physical and [mental health](#) benefit," says lead researcher Guy Faulkner of the Faculty of Physical Education and Health at the University of Toronto, Canada. "So thirty minutes of moderate physical activity on most or all days of the week is a good goal to aim for. Start slowly and build up."

Schizophrenia is a serious [mental illness](#) affecting four in every 1,000 people. It is already known that exercise can improve mental health, but so far there has been only limited evidence of effects in schizophrenia. The new review focused on three recent small studies that compared the effects of 12-16 week exercise programmes, including components such as jogging, walking and strength training, to standard care or yoga.

The researchers found that exercise programmes improved mental state for measures including anxiety and depression, particularly when compared to standard care. Changes in physical health outcomes were seen but they were not significant overall. However, the researchers

suggest this may be due to the short timescale of the trials.

Two previous reviews have found exercise therapy to be beneficial in schizophrenia, but called for more rigorous research. "This new review suggests that such calls are starting to be addressed," says Faulkner. "But we still need more research that will help us learn how we can get individuals with schizophrenia engaged in exercise programmes in the first place, and how such programmes can be developed and implemented within mental health services. That's one of the biggest challenges for this type of intervention."

Provided by Wiley

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