

Researchers develop tools to resolve fitness dilemma for Canadians with spinal cord injuries

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For most Canadians, finding a way to get fit is simple. Exercise equipment is readily available, and advice on workout routines and fitness guidelines are easy to find.

But for the estimated 86,000 Canadians living with spinal cord injury (SCI), finding the way to fitness can be complicated and frustrating, and that can directly impact quality of life.

"We know that for people living with [spinal cord injuries](#), there is a tremendous need for basic information on how and where to be active," said Kathleen Martin Ginis, a professor in the Department of Kinesiology at McMaster. "Daily [physical activity](#) levels are lower for those with SCI than the able-bodied population, and that needs to change. Fitness plays a vital role in overall health."

Martin Ginis and a team of researchers have developed a comprehensive toolkit to be used as a resource for people with SCI. It provides online guidance on such issues as appropriate aerobic activity, how to develop a plan to get fit, sticking to that plan and how to work out safely.

"The leading causes of death among people with SCI are [chronic diseases](#) that are often related to inactivity, such as heart disease or [type 2 diabetes](#)", said Martin Ginis. "But with the right resources, we can help ensure they are not resigned to a life of inactivity."

"Our job is to assist people with spinal [cord injuries](#) achieve the greatest positive results in their lives, and this is an example of how research innovation and excellence can make a life-changing difference to those who choose to use it. When best practices in research becomes a part of a personal lifestyle, people enjoy better health and are happier," said Bill Adair, executive director of the Canadian Paraplegic Association Ontario.

The kit follows up on new exercise guidelines released by the same research group earlier this year, the first for people with any form of disability.

Specifically, research suggests otherwise healthy adults with SCI need to participate in at least 20 minutes of moderate to vigorous [aerobic activity](#) two times per week, as well as strength training exercises two times per week.

"As the national voice of physical activity and sport participation, ParticipACTION is proud to support initiatives that enable Canadians to become more physically active," said Kelly Murumets, president and CEO of ParticipACTION. "The tool kit is an excellent resource to help Canadians living with a spinal cord injury meet the recommended Physical Activity Guidelines."

The toolkit was developed in partnership with SCI Action Canada, the Ontario Neurotrauma Foundation, and the Rick Hansen Institute and will be available at [www.http://sciactioncanada.ca](http://sciactioncanada.ca) .

Provided by McMaster University

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