

Exercise benefits people with asthma

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Appropriate exercise programs can provide valuable benefits to people with asthma, helping to reduce the severity of attacks or prevent them entirely, finds a new evidence review in *The Cochrane Library*. The review also found that, contrary to fears that patients and parents of asthmatic children sometimes have, exercise does not generally worsen the condition.

"Sometimes people with asthma don't like to use medications all the time. Some people simply forget to use them whilst others use them but not regularly enough to prevent [asthma attacks](#)," said lead author Kristin Carson, a doctoral student specializing in respiratory medicine at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Adelaide, Australia. She considers [physical exercise](#) a valuable alternative approach to help control asthma attacks.

Asthma, a chronic condition, has become increasingly common in recent decades, note the review's authors, affecting 350 million people worldwide and accounting for 1 in every 250 deaths. The authors note that the benefits of exercise persist despite the fact that exercise is itself a common trigger of asthma attacks, along with others including pollen, and other airborne allergens.

For their analysis, the researchers included 21 randomized, controlled studies. Together, the studies included data obtained from 772 people, 8 years of age and older. All the participants engaged in whole body [aerobic exercise](#), such as using a treadmill or swimming, lasting 20 to 30 minutes, two or three times weekly. The [exercise programs](#) lasted between 6 and 16 weeks.

Participants tolerated the exercise well, suffering no adverse effects due to the exertion. None of the [study participants](#) experienced worse symptoms after participation.

The training programs improved the subjects' cardiopulmonary fitness, as measured by an increase in their maximum level of [oxygen intake](#). Generally, the team found that the [asthma patients](#) involved in the studies responded to physical training in a similar manner to people without asthma.

The new review also found some evidence that the exercise programs contributed to an improved quality of life (QOL), which may include improved mental health and an enhanced psychosocial wellbeing.

Carson noted that these findings should be reassuring to people with asthma or parents of children with asthma who are considering participation in an appropriately supervised exercise program for themselves or their youngsters.

Felix S.F. Ram, PhD, senior lecturer in clinical pharmacology at Massey University's College of Health in Auckland, New Zealand who along with colleagues performed one of the earlier Cochrane Reviews on this subject, said that the new review "strengthens the evidence on asthma and training published earlier."

He emphasized that this review shows that exercise does not worsen asthma symptoms and, "There is little to no reason that patients with asthma should not fully participate in regular physical activity, provided that preventative medications for those with exercise-induced asthma have been administered properly."

Provided by Health Behavior News Service

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