

**Exercising:**  
**How It can Benefit Those**  
**Battling with Multiple Sclerosis**

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## **Background**

The traditional medical community has been starting to understand more about how exercises and intense physical therapy can help to restore more of the ability to function to the patients that have experienced strokes, head trauma or certain types of physical damage resulting from accidents or falls.

But in the case of nerve damage that can also result from accidents or falls or in the case of neurological diseases, nerve disorders or other types of nerve damage, including Multiple Sclerosis (MS), most of the traditional medical community appears to think that intense physical therapy doesn't help much to improve on how much these patients can function.

In the case of those diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis (MS), often more limited and less intensive physical therapy tends to be what is provided within the first 2 to 5 years of the patient first being diagnosed -- without any goal or purpose provided to guide the physical therapy to be more effective.

But this is gradually starting to change! There are some traditional medical doctors that have been starting to realize that as they use more intense physical therapy for their patients, that have certain types of nerve dysfunction or maybe even nerve damage -- that these patients are showing improvements to their ability to function on a daily basis.

Those that have been diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis are finally starting to receive more intense physical therapy. The result after doing the intense physical therapy for a period of time is improvements are visibly seen on how much more these patients can function on a daily basis!

### **Can Exercising Help those with Multiple Sclerosis?**

What the traditional medical community is gradually starting to understand more is that intense physical therapy or even consistently exercising can help to stimulate the nerves to develop new neurons, establish new neural pathways or retrain our bodies to allow them to regain more of their abilities to function again. All patients diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis appear to have varying degrees of some type of nerve damage.

Maybe the traditional medical community is finally starting to understand and pursue a better approach to work on finding a way to reverse the nerve damage that typically results for those diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis.

Doing regular exercise and/or going through intense physical therapy can help to restore some of the functionality that has been "taken away" by the mild to severe symptoms that are most often associated with Multiple Sclerosis.

Doing consistent exercise or under going intense physical therapy is not the only way to reduce or relive the symptoms of Multiple Sclerosis by itself, but it can help in a big way in increasing how well those diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis can recover. From what I have found from my own research for myself, while battling with a severe case of Multiple Sclerosis, that doing regular exercises or undergoing intense physical therapy can help much better if done in combination with changing your diet, taking supplements (vitamins, herbs, etc.) to restore vitamin deficiencies in our body juicing and eating organically grown produce, meats and whole grains, in addition to using natural and alternative treatments to detoxify your system from heavy metals and other environmental pollutants.

Over the period of time since I have been diagnosed with MS, I have tried many things on my journey to wellness. During this time, I have found that it makes a big difference if you can find a way to do exercises as often as your body can tolerate it. After you have been diagnosed with MS, over doing it with exercising is not a good idea either, but pacing yourself and giving your body breaks after exercising, for at least a day, will not only help to improve your ability to handle exercising -- but this will help your body to gain more of the benefits from doing the exercises and allow your body time to be able to repair and replenish your strength instead of causing your body damage from pushing yourself too hard.

You will need to consult your medical practitioner before you start any type of exercises, since the type of exercises that you need to do and what type your body can handle depends on what other health conditions you may also have that are in combination with your particular case of MS. Your doctor can help you to determine what types of exercises are recommended for your set of health conditions. But in general, even if no other health conditions accompany your particular case of MS, it is strongly recommended that you discuss any exercises that you are considering doing with your medical doctor -- prior to starting anything on your own.

The exercises that are discussed in this e-book, as possible ones for use with MS, are less strenuous on your system because of the incredible fatigue that often accompanies most cases of Multiple Sclerosis. Because of the fatigue associated with MS, it is recommended that you rest for at least 1 day after the day that you do exercises to give your body a chance to repair and recover. If needed, you can also rest for 2 or 3 days after the day that you

exercise. But -- I would suggest doing shorter periods of exercise more consistently with at least a day of rest and repair afterwards to help build up your stamina and to give your body a chance to heal and rebuild instead of totally wearing yourself out and tearing down your muscles without giving them a chance to rebuild.

How your body responds to exercise will help you to decide how many days you may need to take a break for -- after the days that you do exercises - to give your body a chance to rest and rebuild. You will need to determine with the help of any medical doctors that may be involved in your particular case of Multiple Sclerosis as to what type of exercises would be the most helpful and the least exhausting for your particular case of Multiple Sclerosis. The exercise routine that you develop for yourself, under the supervision of your medical health care practitioner, will help you to regain the functioning of your body again.

In my extensive reading on books on various type of treatments that have been used for Multiple Sclerosis, I have found some very helpful information, given by medical doctors, nurses, naturopaths, nutritionists, dieticians and the like. I also found information on alternative and natural ways to supply the body with what it needs to help the body repair itself and restore the patients' ability to function again. Exercise and physical therapy are parts of the puzzle of stimulating the body to give it what it needs to function again.

## **What are the Benefits of Exercising for Those with Multiple Sclerosis?**

Based on my own research for exercises that continue to help to increase how much those with MS can function-- I have found that certain types of exercises can help us to function better in the following ways:

- ➔ **Reduce mobility problems** – like **walking, standing, transferring** (you *need a slide board to transfer* – if you are unable to stand). Exercising allows our bodies to regain at least some or maybe even all of the ability to stand and/or walk.
- ➔ **Increase Stamina** – **building up your stamina** can help you to do more things for a longer period of time without being so exhausted all of the time...things that you were unable to do before you started doing these exercises. **Gradually increasing the time** that you do these *exercises...will build up your stamina!*
- ➔ **Reduce Fatigue** – This goes along with increasing energy levels and

increasing stamina as you set up a routine that you go through with doing **consistent exercising with rests in between** to allow your body to rebuild and recover after each day that you exercise.

- **Increase Muscle Strength** – rebuild muscles that have weakened or have reduced in muscle mass from inactivity – **increase ability to stand and walk** by *increasing muscle strength in legs* to support body weight.
- **Increase Functionality** – some days you can **barely function**, but...doing these exercises will help you to **function better** and *more often*!
- **Reduce Spasms** – of arms, legs, hands and feet! Stretching and strengthening the muscles that tend to spasm...helps to **reduce the frequency and severity of the spasms** themselves. Inactivity and lack of exercise can actually contribute to spasms, in addition to deficiencies of certain vitamins. Exercising can actually help to “reprogram” the confused nerve signals to actually help them function more like they should.
- **Increase Balance** – **making standing, sitting and walking easier**. Balance allows us to adjust to movement as we walk or stand and **allows us to stand and walk**.
- **Boost Immune System** – **reduce frequency, severity and duration** of the often frequent infections that tend to accompany Multiple Sclerosis! Exercising helps to rebuild our immune systems to prevent infections from taking over as frequently. It gives our immune system the ability to **fight back against infections**.
- **Increase Energy Levels** – the **right exercises** can actually *increase the energy levels* of those with Multiple Sclerosis...but gradually increasing the length of time and the types of exercises that are done are part of the key! Exercising *increases circulation and blood oxygen levels, in addition to boosting metabolism, heart rate and lung capacity*. All of these functions help to increase the energy that a person has, even with Multiple Sclerosis, can experience from **consistent exercising**.
- **Reduce Muscle Tightness** – if you have **trouble standing** -- because of Multiple Sclerosis...your *legs muscles* can **become very tight**. Doing these exercises reduces the leg tightness! Your muscles and tendons in your legs can become tight from sitting for long periods of time or from inactivity that you get extra spasms, cramping in your legs, arms, back or where ever they may be. **Stretching the tendons and the muscles reduce tightness in the legs**.
- **Increase Lymph Drainage** – if you have problems with *fluid build up and swelling in your legs or feet*, these exercises will **improve lymph drainage**

and **reduce swelling** of both your legs and your feet!

- **Detoxify Your Body** – reduce toxins in your system from infections...**remove toxins** from environmental pollutants that we may be absorbed from air, water or food. Lack of activity and exercise can cause our bodies not to detoxify from harmful substances that can enter our bodies in many ways. If these harmful substances aren't leaving our bodies very well, this can add to how often we have symptoms of sickness. If we can **increase how well we detoxify**, many of our symptoms that result from a build up of these toxins go away as the toxins are removed from our systems.
- **Stimulate Nerves** – consistently **exercising the muscles** that are linked to the damaged nerves can help to *stimulate new neural pathways to develop*. **Find out how!** (Hint: if we exercise the muscles that are linked to the nerves that are not functioning very well, medical science is finding that the nerves can be stimulated to develop new neural (or nerve) pathways and connections to that muscle that are stimulated.)
- **ReBuild Self-Confidence** – as *your ability to function returns*, your **confidence in your ability to function on your own again returns** also. *This is important* -- because I have found that as my ability to function disappeared, so did part of my self-confidence that I could function on my own as I had previously. **Rebuilding self-confidence is vital to your own recovery.**

There are so many different types of exercises available that often we don't know where to start and we don't know which ones can help in the case of Multiple Sclerosis.

I suspect that there may even be a way to stimulate our bodies to repair the myelin sheaths on the spinal cord that is often damaged in the case of Multiple Sclerosis, although medical science doesn't have any idea about this concept as of yet. But why can't this be reality?

In the case of stroke patients, that have had especially severe strokes, the medical community has found that intense physical therapy actually enables that person's body to regain much of the functionality that has been lost because of severe nerve damage that has been seen as a result of the severe stroke. Maybe in the future the medical community can find a way to apply this same idea or something related to this that can help to repair the nerve damage often associated with Multiple Sclerosis.

## **What Type of Exercises can Help to Reduce the Symptoms of Multiple Sclerosis?**

Often people associate exercising with fatigue and hard work, but in the case of those with Multiple Sclerosis, extreme fatigue is already present, more often than not. If a person has the symptoms of Multiple Sclerosis and the exercises that are done are too physically exhausting, the exercises just increase fatigue. Too many people think that those that have Multiple Sclerosis should avoid exercising because of the fatigue problem -- but this is a very big misconception.

Certain exercises actually help to reduce symptoms and restore some functionality of those with Multiple Sclerosis. These exercises can be done in a particular way that can help to improve stamina, boost your immune system to make it easier to fight off infections, increase balance, reduce mobility problems (walking, standing, transferring – if you can't stand), reduce overall fatigue, increase functionality, increase energy levels, reduce muscle tightness, increase lymph drainage and help our bodies to detoxify better.

There are so many exercises that can be done, but which ones can help benefit those with Multiple Sclerosis? I have found that the following types of exercises have helped to reduce my own symptoms of Multiple Sclerosis.

Yoga - can help to restore balance, reduce stress, relax your body, reduce muscle and tendon tightness, increase flexibility, and return tone to your muscles throughout your body.

Tai Chi - can calm down your nervous system and reduce stress (if you can't stand or walk there is a modified Tai Chi that can help).

Qi Gong – can help increase the strength and flexibility of your muscles, but it does require you to function more including standing, walking and being able to get on the floor and move your legs and arms more freely.

Balance Ball Exercises – can help to increase balance, increase the ability to stand, increase leg strength, increase stamina and endurance.

Stretch Band Exercises – can help to increase the stretching and strengthening of your muscles by using resistance to the muscle to work the various muscle groups.

Using Hand Weights – helps to build up strength, endurance and stamina in the arms and upper body.

Using Ankle Weights – helps to build up strength, endurance and stamina in the legs and hips.

Practicing Standing – helps to increase your stamina and muscle (if you aren't used to standing much you can become light-headed when you try to stand – this is reduced by increasing length of time that you stand each time that you do stand).

Practicing Walking with a Walker – helps to increase control of your legs and to help to retrain the nerve response to function better. This is started up again after you practicing standing for daily for a month or so to get your body used to being vertical again.

Breathing Exercises – reduces stress, calms down your nervous system, increases oxygen in your blood stream, relaxes your breathing, makes it easier to breathe and brings more oxygen to the brain - making it easier for your brain to function.

Meditation - brings an overall state of inner and outer calm to your system and calms down nervousness, anxiety and "mind chatter".

## **A Few Exercises for Multiple Sclerosis (that you can do at Home without equipment)**

### Stretching and Stretch Band Exercises

Exercise #1: Work your Thighs & your Hips (You'll need a Stretch Band for this exercise) --

- Lie flat on a bed or on the floor, after tying a stretch exercise band around your thighs.
- Lie with your legs out straight and your arms straight at your sides.
- Bring your knees up with your legs together and your feet flat on the bed or the floor.
- Separate your knees about shoulder width apart (the band tied around your thighs should be stretch out at this point.
- Count to 5 while holding this pose.
- Bring your knees back together.
- Wait a few seconds and repeat this same exercise 10 times
- Put your knees down and put your legs out straight again.
- Rest for a few minutes before continuing with the next exercise

Exercise #2: Stretching Tight (No Stretch Band Needed)

- Lie flat on the bed or the floor with your legs out straight and your arms at your side.
- Bring one knee up your chest while keeping the other one out as straight as you can.
- Wrap your arms around your bent knee and pull your knee closer to your chest to increase the stretch.
- Hold this position for a count of 10.
- Let go of the leg that was just bent and straighten it out.
- Repeat this on the other leg.
- This is one set.
- Do 5 sets of this exercise, alternating legs.
- Rest between sets.

### Exercise #3: Stretching Lower Back, Back of Legs and Hips

- Lie flat on a bed or the floor with your Legs out straight.
- Place your Arms flat on the floor by your sides.
- Lift your Hips, while pressing down on the bed or floor with your hands and leaning on the front part of your arms to help support your weight.
- Hold this position for a few seconds -- count to 10 if you can. Initially you may only be able to raise your hips for a few seconds before you have to relax on the bed or floor to rest. That's okay. Just build up to a count of 10 gradually over time.
- Repeat this exercise 10 times.
- Relax totally and rest for a few minutes between each time that you do this exercise.
- Rest for 5 or 10 minutes after you complete this exercise.

(This exercise will stretch all the muscles around the waist and lower back; this exercise may be more difficult at first, but it really helps if you sit for more hours, like if you are not able to stand and/or walk much)

### Exercise #4: Stretching Muscles around Hips and Lower Back

- Lie flat on bed or floor with legs out straight and arms at sides.
- Press hips don towards bed or floor (this is easier to do on a bed).
- Hold this position for count of 10.
- Relax and Rest for 1 or 2 minutes.
- Repeat 10 times
- Rest in between each time that you do this exercise for 1 to 2 minutes.
- Rest for 5 to 10 minutes after you complete this exercise.

## Strengthening Hand Weight Exercises

### Exercise #1: Strengthening Triceps (Upper Arm Muscles)

*(You will need hand weight of varying weights: 1 to 10 pounds – Don't overdo it! Use only what you can comfortably handle and work up to heavier weights if you can handle it)*

- You will need 2 of whatever weight that you choose in hand weights. I suggest starting off with 1 pound hand weights and working up to 10 pounds only if you think that you can handle it without stressing out your body. Don't overdo it!
- If you can, stand with your arms out straight in front of you (at shoulder height) with both hands together -- with a 1 pound hand weight in each hand.
- While keeping your arms at shoulder height, separate your hands and move the weights slowly out to your sides. (the hand weights should remain at shoulder height as you move them from in front of you out to your sides).
- Your arms should now be at shoulder height with your arms out straight from your sides.
- Hold the hand weights here while you count to 5.
- While keeping your arms out straight at shoulder height, bring your hands back together with your arms straight out in front of you at shoulder height.
- Put your arms down by your side and rest for a minute or 2.
- Repeat this exercise 5 times.
- Gradually work up over a period of time to being able to do this exercise 10 times with resting in between to reduce fatigue.
- Rest for as long as you need to after completing this exercise.
- If you can handle it, you can increase the hand weight size that you use. Just be sure that the weight in each hand are the same weight and that you don't over do it and use more weight than you can handle. If you can handle it, you can work up to adding a heavier hand weight up to 10 pounds.

(If you are unable to stand to do this exercise, it can be done sitting down.)

### Exercise #2: Doing Curls with Hand Weights to Strengthen Upper Arms

- Using 2 hand weights of the same weight, sit or stand with your arms hanging down, with your hands resting on your thighs (with a hand weight in each hand).
- Hold the hand weights in your hands with your knuckles facing towards your chin.
- Bring your hands up to just under your chin while facing your knuckles towards your chin.

→ Do this 10 times and then rest.

### Exercise #3: Exercising Whole Arm, one at a time

- You will need 2 hand weights of the same weight for this exercise.
- You can Stand or Sit while doing this exercise.
- With a hand weight in each hand, put your arms down at your sides, with your knuckles facing forward (towards the front of your body), hold your arm straight starting with your hand by your side.
- Raise 1 arm at a time to shoulder height, going out away from the side of your body – while keeping your arm at your side.
- Slowly raise your arm up to shoulder height and hold your arm out straight while holding the hand weight in your hand -- while counting to 5.
- Slowly lower your arm back down to your side.
- Repeat the above steps with the other arm.
- Doing this exercise once with each arm is one set.
- Do 5 to 10 sets of this exercise (only do what your body can tolerate without over exhausting yourself).
- If you feel the need to, you can rest for 1 to 5 minutes between sets
- Rest for 5 to 10 minutes after you are done this exercise before you start one of the other exercises.

There are many other types of exercises, therapies and other alternative and natural ways that can assist those of us with Multiple Sclerosis in reducing how severe and how often our symptoms may become. Many of the exercises that I have found that do bring benefits to those diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis can be done while either standing or sitting although some require you to be able to stand, balance on 1 foot or maybe even be able to take a step or 2. But whichever exercises that you are able to do – by all means do. Exercising can help to restore more function to different parts of your body and in addition can help to reduce the exacerbations, severity and frequency of your symptoms of Multiple Sclerosis. Just be sure to discuss anything that you are considering as an option for your particular case of Multiple Sclerosis with your medical doctor, prior to considering starting anything on your own.

If you would like to learn more about what I have found to reduce the severity and frequency of my symptoms of Multiple Sclerosis, go to [www.tamingmultiplesclerosis.com](http://www.tamingmultiplesclerosis.com) to learn more.

### **Additional Resources and References (related to what I discuss in this e-book**

1. Reversing Multiple Sclerosis by Celeste Pepe, D.C., N. D. and

Lisa Hamond

2. Yoga and Multiple Sclerosis: A Journey to Health and Healing by  
Loren M. Fishman, M. D. & Eric L. Small