PHYSIO TIPS
IN MARCH

KICKING COVID TO THE CURB

Returning to physical activity after COVID-19

THERAPY IN ACTION

Physio Tips is a monthly newsletter aimed at educating the public regarding the latest evidence in injury management, without all the medical jargon. We will keep it simple and concise, but full of knowledge gems in order to empower and equip you.

REACH OUT TO US

We are continually learning more about Covid-19 and the one thing we know for certain is that the road to recovery is not always straightforward. Covid-19 has greatly increased the number of people who are facing issues with returning to their normal level of activity, most of whom were previously fit and healthy.

In this month's newsletter we will be focusing on some guidelines to help you return to your healthy level of physical activity.

What do we mean by physical activity?

Although we may not all be athletes, physical activity encompasses much more than sport and should be part of our everyday lives. According to public health guidelines, we should exercise for at least 150 min at a moderate intensity or 75 min at a vigorous intensity, weekly. Although this can include sport and exercise, it can also include other activities such as gardening, walking or carrying heavy shopping bags.

CLICK HERE for more on physical activity

When is it safe to return to physical activity?

Studies have found that people may feel unsure of when and how to return to physical activities after Covid-19 – some may have tried to return to their baseline level of fitness, and found that they were unable to do so. This can be very discouraging, but following the right approach may help you succeed. See below for more guidance.

Criteria for return to exercise

Before returning to exercise, you firstly have to comply with the following key considerations:

- Have rested at least 10 days from onset of symptoms.
- Have been asymptomatic for at least 7 days.
- Are off all treatment e.g. paracetamol.
- Are able to perform normal activities of daily living easily.
- Are able to walk 500m on a flat terrain without experiencing excessive breathlessness or fatigue.

Using the Borg scale

The Borg scale is a tool that one can use to determine your level of exertion. We will refer to this scale in the stages below. The scale has been shown to correlate well with heart rate and therefore when you get to a level 19/20 you are probably close to your maximum heart rate.

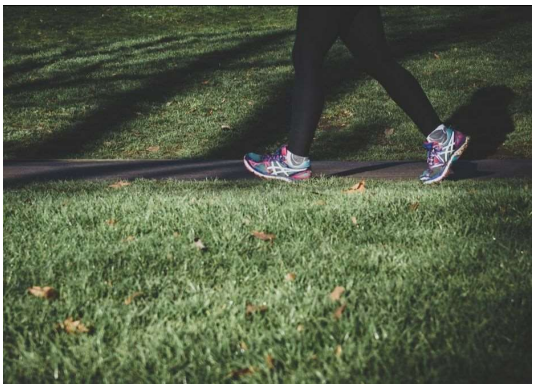
COLOR	BORG	Explanation/ Perceived Exertion
Green	6	No exertion at all
	7	Extremely light
	8	La, la, la :-)
Yellow	9	Very light - (easy walking slowly at a comfortable pace)
	10	This is the effort level where you can't hear your breathing,
	11	you're able to easily talk and you can run here for a very long time
	12	Light. Here you are building **aerobic endurance**.
Orange	13	Somewhat hard (It is quite an effort; you feel tired but can continue)
	14	You start to hear your breathing, not gasping for air.
	15	You can talk, but more challenging, use one- or two-word answers.
	16	Hard This is considered your **steady state**.
Red	17	Very hard (very strenuous, and you are very fatigued) **ANAEROBIC THRESHOLD**
	18	Breathing is vigorous. You can't talk, you're reaching for air.
	19	Extremely hard (You're counting the minutes until it ends)
	20	Maximal exertion

STAGES OF PHASED RETURN TO ACTIVITY:

Phase 1

Goal: Extremely light intensity activities
Duration: 7 days minimum
Exertion (based on Borg's scale): 6 to 8
Exercise samples: Stretching, breathing exercises, seated exercises, walking indoors

CLICK HERE for some breathing exercises



Phase 2

Goal: Light intensity activities
Duration: 7 days minimum
Exertion (based on Borg's scale): 6 to 11
Exercise samples: Houshold tasks, light gardening, gentle walking, balance exercises, gentle yoga, light strengthening
Progression: Increase 10-15min daily at the same exertion level; progress to phase 3 after a minimum 7 days or once able to walk 30min at RPE of 11

Phase 3

Goal: Moderate intensity
Duration: 7 days minimum
Exertion (based on Borg's scale): 12 to 14
Exercise samples: Complete 2 intervals of 5min aerobic exercise, seperated by 1 block of recovery; exercise can include brisk walking, jogging, swimming, cycling, stair climbing
Progression: Add one interval per day as tolerated; progress to phase 4 after a minimum 7 days and when you can achieve 30min sessions, and feel recovered within 1 hour

Phase 4

Goal: Moderate intensity with added complex activities
Duration: 7 days minimum
Exertion (based on Borg's scale): 12 to 14
Exercise samples: Train 2:1 (training:recovery); add complex activities such as balance, coordination and strength exercises. Examples include jogging with directional changes, body weight circuit
Progression: Progress to phase 5 after 7 days and when fatigue levels are normal

Phase 5

Goal: Return to baseline exercise!
Duration: n/a
Exertion (based on Borg's scale): >15 as tolerated
Exercise samples: Return to regular exercise pattern - running, cycling, hill climbing

General tips

- Only exercise if you feel recovered from the previous day.
- Spend a few minutes warming up/ cooling down before/ after sessions respectively.
- If any symptoms reoccur (including excessive fatigue) while going through the phases, return to the previous phase and progress again after a minimum of 24 hours' period of rest without symptoms.

CLICK HERE for more information on recovering from COVID-19

"It's important to remember that recovery won't be a linear process – there will be days where you feel more like your old self, and then other where you feel you've taken a big step backwards. But be reassured that it's OK if you feel like this." *Air Physiotherapy*

WATCH THIS SPACE FOR PHYSIO TIPS IN APRIL:
THE MYTHS ABOUT POSTURE