

Low Impact Exercise Guide

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Not every man and woman is cut out for the high intensity training that many people embrace when they want to look and feel better. Some people need or prefer low impact exercise routines.

Strength training, endurance, flexibility and balance are the four prominent areas where you can embrace a low impact exercise regimen and receive health benefits without putting your body at risk for injury or exhaustion.

What Is Low Impact Exercise?

Low impact exercise is the type of exercise that doesn't put stress on your body. That means, it's kind to your joints and bones and muscles. If you've ever felt the pain of working out the following day, then you've probably engaged in high impact exercise.

Walking is the most prominent low impact exercise people engage in. Anyone can walk, anywhere, at any time. You don't need special equipment aside from comfortable shoes.

You can walk on a flat plane or up and down hills, depending on your fitness level. You can walk outside, indoors, in place, fast, or slow. It all revolves around your comfort level.

Aerobics are often considered high impact because if you've ever seen some of those classes, you'll know that there's a lot of movement and bouncing around. But there are also low impact aerobic classes. You can also find DVDs that take it easy on the impact side of aerobic exercise.

Tai chi is a popular low impact exercise. It's an ancient Chinese exercise based on slow movement and deep breathing, combined. You will

stretch your body and put it in a state of constant motion, while keeping your joints and other body parts protected.

Yoga is another low impact exercise, but don't mistake it as being easy. The great thing about yoga is that as your fitness level improves, you can stick with the low impact, but increase the calorie burn based on what you choose to do with it.

Pilates is a similar exercise to yoga and tai chi in that you'll be strengthening your core, not putting stress on your body, and reaping the rewards of getting some low impact exercise worked into your day.

One low impact exercise that many people enjoy is water-based. That could include swimming (like doing laps in the pool), or water aerobics or strength training.

Not only are water exercises good for your body and mind, but most people have a lot of fun being in the water to swim, and it feels relaxing, not strenuous. You can even take local classes for this type of exercise.

Chair dancing sounds kind of silly – and it is – but it's lots of fun, and a great form of low impact exercise that you can do to get the blood flowing in your body. Chair dancing is when you dance around and move – while sitting in your chair.

You're mostly doing arm movements, but also some leg exercises – and your middle gets movement, too! There are DVD courses you can take. This is especially good for elderly and disabled individuals or morbidly obese individuals who can't get around easily, or at all.

Strength training is very important for good health. You lose more weight with more muscle because muscle burns more calories than fat does. You can strength train without injuring yourself and build up to increased reps, sets and weights over time.

Table games (such as ping pong) don't sound like exercise, but they are! They're considered low impact because both feet are on the ground, you

don't have to put stress on your body, and the best part is – they're enjoyable!

Exercise bikes can be a great way to work in low impact exercise – as long as you choose to use one with low resistance. On most bikes, you set the resistance level, and if you do too much at once, you might strain your knees. Build up over time and enjoy the stationary bike in a gym or in the comfort of your own home.

Elliptical machines can give you a nice, hard workout, without any stress on your joints. The elliptical is preferred by many people over the treadmill because the treadmill has a hard surface and the shock of each step can hurt. With an elliptical, it's like floating in air – but you're moving and getting exercise benefits!

Rowing is a good way to firm up your body and burn calories. You can use a rowing machine in a gym or at home, but you can also take up a sport like kayaking to enjoy yourself more if you dread exercising.

Golf is a great sport to take up for some low impact exercise. Golfers of all ages enjoy this sport – from toddlers and senior citizens. You can walk and play 9-18 holes, or you can ride a cart and still get some of the benefits from each swing, and the steps you take to your ball, the green and the teebox.

Dancing can be a fun way to work in some low impact exercise. You can use dance in many ways, such as:

- Zumba (or other dance) classes
- Kinect or Wii dance games
- Dance DVDs
- Random dancing around the house

There are no right or wrong ways to work in low impact exercise. It's all about getting some movement during your day. You want to push

yourself a little bit, but you should never physically be in pain when doing this type of workout regimen.

Who Needs Low Impact Exercise?

Senior citizens are often the primary demographic for low impact exercises. As we age, our minds and bodies are not as agile as they once were. We're prone to fractures if we fall, and low impact exercise helps you retain movement without putting yourself at risk.

Injured individuals who have suffered from a specific injury – or those experiencing pain from a disability – are perfect for low impact exercise, especially during a recovery period.

Whether you're restricted to a wheelchair or you have the ability to stand and move, you can enjoy low impact exercise and gain cardiovascular, muscular and additional health benefits from your efforts.

Arthritis sufferers often feel a lot of pain in their joints. Every movement can be painful, so high impact exercise may be out of the question. Moving your body gently and slowly can enable you to exercise without pain.

Heavily overweight can suffer from orthopedic injuries if they set out on a high impact exercise regimen right off the bat. The best way for you to go about it is to ease into a fitness role through activities like walking and swimming.

Pregnant women are often unable to engage in high impact exercise. When you're pregnant, you can sometimes lose sight of your core balance, and low impact exercise helps prevent falls until the baby arrives.

Not only that, but you'll tire more easily when you're pregnant, and low impact exercise helps you work in movement – plus, it ensures the baby will be safe from harm compared to dangerous activities you may have done before you conceived.

There's another group of people who fit the demographic for low impact exercise – beginners! You never want to engage in difficult, advanced exercise when you're new because you can injure yourself.

Health Benefits of Low Impact Exercise

There are many benefits to low impact exercise. Exercise in general is good for you, and when you're stationary, your body can't fight disease and repair itself as well as when you get your blood flowing.

Low impact exercise helps with depression. If you suffer from anxiety, panic attacks, stress or depression, then you know the common feeling that happens with them.

You feel paralyzed, you might feel lethargic – basically, you don't want to move! You especially don't have the heart to embrace a high impact, exhausting routine.

So a low impact exercise regimen can help release endorphins in your body and give you some hope and happiness during your day. It will be even better if you engage in things you find fun (like dancing or swimming), or sign up for low impact exercise where you're socializing with others (like dance lessons)!

Low impact exercise improves your reflexes. This can be perfect for those who have suffered an injury – as well as the elderly population who has started to see some decline in this area of their lives.

This form of exercise helps with cardiovascular health, even if you're not vigorously moving about. All you're doing is shooting for your target heart rate, and with high impact activities, you usually go way over that target rate.

Low impact exercise helps lower your blood pressure. Whenever you exercise, you're strengthening your heart. The heart needs to be strong to pump blood vigorously through your body without working so hard, and exercise helps it get strong.

Weight loss is an obvious benefit to low impact exercise. Any time you're moving, you're burning calories. Sedentary individuals are more prone to gain weight and become obese.

It might take a little longer than if you were to adopt a high impact regimen, but the overall long-term weight loss will be the same if you stick to it and exercise consistently.

Best Low Impact Exercise Equipment

Many people who have to (or want to) go on a low impact exercise routine don't enjoy working out in public. But some love it for the socialization factor. If you don't have a pool, you can join a place like your local YMCA to get aquatic movement.

As for machines that help you with low impact workouts, you can either use these machines in the gym (with or without supervision by a trainer), or invest in good equipment for your home and do your exercise every day without excuse.

Ellipticals are the most sought after low impact machines. You can either invest in the foot pedals only, or get a full-scale machine that includes movement for your arms.

Stationary exercise bikes are perfect for low impact exercise. You have two choices – recumbent or upright. A recumbent bike allows you to sit in more of a bucket seat, where you're slightly reclined. An upright bike is what you would use when cycling outdoors, only this one is an indoor, stationary version.

Rowing machines are wonderful total body low impact workouts. You can get regular rowers that work with magnets, or you can invest in a water rower that uses fluid as the primary resistance factor.

Stair steppers and stair climbers are loved by many low impact exercise enthusiasts. You might think that stepping up stairs would be high impact, since it tends to wear many people out, but the impact on your joints is actually small.

Of course, you do have the option of increasing the resistance if you start to believe the machine has become too easy on your body – and this is a milestone that you'll be happy to achieve.

Whether you simply hate exercising or you have a valid reason for avoiding high impact workouts, you'll enjoy becoming addicted to fun, low impact exercise routines that get your heart pumping without causing you to wake up the next morning, barely able to move due to stiffness.



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