



**MYASTHENIA GRAVIS**  
**FOUNDATION OF AMERICA, INC.**

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## **EXERCISE AND MYASTHENIA GRAVIS**

**P**atients often ask what type of exercise they should do. This question comes up frequently since all patients with myasthenia are taught that exercise actually produces weakness and that rest affords return of strength. Many patients interpret this by assuming that any exercise other than activities of daily living is detrimental to the disease process and will actually make them worse.

While it is true that patients with generalized myasthenia should not force themselves into exercise programs that require maximum output and produce weakness, it is not true that they should avoid all exercise. In fact, myasthenia itself tends to produce a change in the muscle which is very similar to disuse atrophy, and this change needs to be combated by regular activity which does not strain the capacity of the individuals' muscle in question.

Beneficial exercise is that which is done repetitively and done in a way that stops short of muscle fatigue. This includes using a stationary bicycle or walking. The key here is to do something both pleasant and non-stressful to increase rather than decrease muscle function, keep weight down and reaffirm the positive emotional feelings one can get through a regular individualized exercise program.

*By Linton C. Hopkins, M. D., Emory Clinic, Atlanta, GA  
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MG is an autoimmune neuromuscular disorder.  
Symptoms may include: double vision, drooping eyelids, slurred speech,  
difficulty chewing and swallowing, weakness in arms and/or legs.