

Living Well With Lupus – More on Exercise

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Building on my last article, *Appropriate Exercise*, I offer some more ideas and definitions to consider.

A basic resistance band is a piece of stretchy, round tubing or flat band. Look for latex free materials. The only ones I have bought are all latex free. Some tubing has built in handles and other accessories for holding the tubing at different heights between a door and door frame, leg straps, etc.. They are available everywhere at department stores, big box stores, fitness supplies, discount stores, physiotherapist offices and list goes on. Personally I found the tubing easier to use than the flat bands. Both bands and tubing come in various resistance or difficulty levels. Each company uses different colours for different degrees of resistance so yellow in one brand does not equal yellow in another brand. Make sure that the handles are comfortable for your hand. Everyone's hands are different shapes and sizes. Comfort is important to help you stay motivated to do your individualized program.

A chin tuck is a simple exercise where you position your head in line with your spine, not leaning forward or back. You place a finger on your chin to follow your chin's position. Gently lift the top of your head as if there was a string attached to the top toward the back of your head while tucking your chin in slightly. This causes the back of your neck to stretch a little while your chin gets a bit closer to the top of your neck just below your chin. You will feel a very gentle pull down the back of your neck. This is particularly good if you sit driving or at a computer for a lot of time. Your physiotherapist, osteopath, chiropractor or kinesiologist can all show you how to do a chin tuck.

In the book *Stretching* by Bob Anderson ISBN 978-0-936070-46-9, there are diagrams that are easy to follow. In the *Black Creek Community Exercise Manual* the photos are of real people showing how to do the exercises in addition to the written explanations. Your health care provider can suggest which exercises are right for you, how many to do, how many repetitions and how many sets.

An individualized program is set up to meet your goals and uses exercises that are within your current ability to perform without causing yourself harm or injury. Usually there are several components, breathing techniques, stretching, resistance, weight bearing, and sometimes aerobic exercise. Low impact exercise is important for lupus patients to protect their joints. Even when I was on oxygen, there were still gentle exercises I could do. A good exercise program for chronic illness will also include meditation, spiritual journaling,

relaxation exercises such as autogenics, progressive muscle, and guided imagery, all of which can be done before or after the actual exercise or shortly before bed. Body, mind and spirit all work together in our health and wellness. All exercise programs include a warm up, the exercises and a cool down period.

Hydration or adequate clean, pure water intake is important. Drinking water before becoming thirsty, but not to the point of dilutional hyponatremia or over hydration. Dilutional hyponatremia is also known as water intoxication or water poisoning can be as dangerous as being dehydrated, causing potentially fatal disturbance in brain function. Your doctor, physiotherapist, holistic nutritionist, fitness coach, or another member of your health care team can advise you on your water intake. For more information see <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1872071/> or <http://www.healthline.com/health/overhydration#Overview1>

You don't have to exercise alone. A group of my coworkers and I get together every Thursday at lunch to do a half hour of gentle stretching and resistance band work, nothing sweaty enough that you need a shower afterward. It reinforces what each of us is trying to do at home and helps us each to stay with our individual programs. It also gives us a chance to share about what is challenging in our exercise and what is working well. Sometimes a little thing can help. When I go for my 3 mile walks I take one of my leash trained cats with me. In bad weather I take a cat to Petsmart where there are no chemicals in the air like the local shopping mall. I can get a mile and a half in doing the whole store. Sometimes I play guitar sitting on an big exercise ball. Be creative.

Remember to check with your doctor first before starting or increasing your exercise program. Enjoy your program, notice your progress in movement, pain, stamina, thinking, moods or better sleep and write about it in a journal. Your commitment to your well being through gentle exercise is a GIFT that only you can give to yourself. Be the best that you can be!

