Increasing Physical Activity for Veterans with Physical or Medical Limitations

Do I need to see my health care team before beginning physical activity?

Many Veterans can begin mild or moderate intensity exercise safely without having a check-up. Your MOVE!® team can tell you if you should have a check-up before starting.

The following Veterans should see their health care team before starting:

• Those with heart and/or lung disease
• Those planning a program of “vigorous” activity

What is the difference between “mild,” “moderate,” and “vigorous” activity?

• Mild activities should feel like slow walking or rolling.
  - They should not cause much of a sweat or cause you to have trouble breathing.
  - We participate in mild activities throughout the day.
  - Taking out the trash or walking to the mailbox are examples.
• **Moderate activities** include fast walking or rolling.
  - Your heart will beat a little bit faster.
  - You will sweat lightly, but should not be “out of breath” or exhausted.

• **Vigorous activities** will cause the heart to beat very fast.
  - You will sweat heavily and have some difficulty breathing.
  - It is very difficult to perform vigorous activity for a long time.

**Are there certain activities I should avoid?**
Very few activities are “off-limits.”

**Will I make my condition worse by exercising?**
Physical activity **almost always helps improve** medical conditions. It is wise to reduce activity when your condition worsens.

**Will my medicines affect my physical activity?**
Some medications require a close watch. Talk with your health care team about the medications you are currently taking.

**What if I’m in too much pain to be physically active?**
Regular physical activity often **improves** chronic pain. It may sometimes take a few weeks to begin to see a benefit. If you feel your pain will keep you from physical activity, see your health care team.