

S.T.E.P. Exercise Therapy

“Dosing Your Exercise”

Part 3

Exercise should be calibrated as precisely as medication. A 100 mg difference in medication can make all the difference in your body's chemistry and what kind of changes you feel. Too much of a good thing may turn bad! The same holds true with exercise in terms of the type, selection, weight, speed, reps, sets and duration, to name a few. The selection process has both an art and a science behind it.

For example, a person in chronic pain would want to encourage blood flow to the areas in need by using lighter weight (to avoid shunting blood vessels) and doing more repetitions. A lot of repetition here is the key. Research shows that it takes at least 6,000 repetitions, or between 6-8 weeks of a repetitive activity, to change the pain system. So, in this instance, the traditional “3 sets of 10” might not get the results you want. Adjusting the dosage from 80% to around 60% of maximum or doing 3 sets of 30 would be more appropriate, and would also ensure a lighter load on the sensitive tissues that are in pain.

Here's another example. A construction worker at the end of her physical therapy who's no longer in pain would need a completely different kind of training to enable her to lift heavy items, briefly, for a period of time. Dosing her exercise between 90-95% of maximum with multiple sets of 2-4 reps would train her body to the capacity needed for her work.

Someone with a nerve injury needs very specific exercises with multiple subcomponents. These must be done with utmost precision a small number of times in order to not re-inflate the delicate nervous system.

A marathon runner might do similar exercises that a sprinter would for race day preparation, but the variables should be completely different in order to accommodate for the vastly different type of muscle composition (Type I versus Type II) in their leg muscles.

The point of these examples is that we should be getting out of the rut of “3 sets of 10” and start re-designing programs that best address your needs. There is so much research guiding us to make more educated

decisions about how to adjust multiple exercise variables to appropriately address each individual. Not only is your back pain different anatomically from the guy next door, but so is your personality and overall make-up. Who wouldn't you want to be seen and treated as the marvelous human being that you are?

If you are stuck in a rut, still in pain or frustrated that you don't know what to do next for your body health issues, feel free to give me a call for a free phone consultation. I will be happy to talk with you and see if I can assist you on your journey back to wellness.

Sincerely,
Tim Zepelak PT, OCS, CSCS, CMP, RYT