

Contraindications for physical activity/ exercise

Obtaining the appropriate consent from patients before writing a prescription (Rx) for physical activity/exercise (PA/Ex) has ethical and legal consideration. It is important for the patient to understand the purposes and risks associated with the physical activity/exercise Rx.

Absolute

- A recent significant change in the resting ECG suggesting significant ischaemia, recent myocardial infarction (within 2 days) or other acute cardiac event
- Unstable angina
- Uncontrolled cardiac dysrhythmias causing symptoms or hemodynamic compromise
- Symptomatic severe aortic stenosis
- Uncontrolled symptomatic heart failure
- Acute pulmonary embolus or pulmonary infarction
- Acute myocarditis or pericarditis
- Suspected or known dissecting aneurysm
- Acute systematic infection, accompanied by fever, body aches, or swollen lymph glands

Relative ^a

- Left main coronary stenosis
- Moderate stenotic heart disease
- Electrolyte abnormalities (e.g. hypokalemia, hypomagnesemia)
- Severe arterial hypertension (i.e. systolic BP of >200mm Hg and/or a diastolic of BP of >110mm Hg) at rest
- Tachydysrhythmia or bradydysrhythmia
- Hypertrophic cardiomyopathy and other forms of outflow tract obstruction
- Neuromuscular, musculoskeletal, or rheumatoid disorders that are exacerbated by exercise
- High-degree atrioventricular block
- Ventricular aneurysm
- Uncontrolled metabolic disease (e.g., diabetes, thyrotoxicosis, or myxedema)
- Chronic infectious disease (e.g. mononucleosis, hepatitis, AIDS)
- Mental or physical impairment leading to inability to exercise adequately

^a Relative contraindications can be superseded if benefits outweigh risks of exercise. In some instances, these individuals can be exercised with caution and/or using low-level end points, especially if they are asymptomatic at rest.

References

Modified from Gibbons RJ, Balady GJ, Bricker J et al. ACC/AHA 2002 guideline update for exercise testing: a report of the American College of Cardiology/American Heart Association Task Force on Practice Guidelines (Committee on Exercise Testing) [Internet]. 2002. Cited 2007 June 15]. Available from www.acc.org/clinical/guidelines/exercise/dirIndex.htm

Thompson, Walter R. Gordon Neil F. Prescatello, Linda S. ACSM's Guidelines for Exercise Testing and Prescription Eighth Edition. Lippincott Williams and Wilkins, Baltimore 2010. Pg. 54.

Source: ACSM's Guidelines for exercise testing and prescription, 8th edition (2010).