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## Can I Exercise Safely with a Cold?



**T**he average adult gets one to six colds every year, with symptoms lasting a week to 10 days. Should you let these colds interrupt your exercise routine? Probably not, as long as you pay attention to what your body tells you.

The general rule for exercising with a cold is that **if symptoms are all above the neck, it is safe to exercise**. In other words, if your only symptoms are a runny or stuffy nose,

watery eyes and a mild sore throat, go ahead and exercise, but keep your routine low to moderate in intensity and briefer than usual. Studies have shown that light-to-moderate exercise has no effect on a cold—it neither prolongs nor shortens the duration of symptoms. High-intensity exercise, on the other hand, has a negative impact on the immune system and may prolong cold symptoms.

**If you have any below-the-neck symptoms such as a cough, chest congestion, fever, vomiting, diarrhea or body ache, then it is time to take a few days off.** It is especially important to stop exercising if you have a fever because fever is an indication that the body is fighting an infection. When you have below-the-neck symptoms, support your immune system by getting plenty of rest, staying hydrated and eating nutritious food. Return to exercising gradually once symptoms disappear.

Although it is safe to exercise with a cold, please consider the health of your fellow exercisers. Cold viruses are easily transmitted and can live on hard surfaces such as exercise equipment for an hour or more. As a courtesy to your colleagues, try changing your workout to one that uses little or no equipment.

If you suffer from a cold, we can design a “cold workout” appropriate to your level of fitness. You may even find you enjoy the change in routine, and your fellow exercisers will thank you.