Promoting Physical Activity and Exercise in People with Spinal Cord Injuries using Pender’s Health Promotion Model

Secondary conditions of a disability, such as pain, depression, pressure sores, and respiratory illness, often increase the functional disability of an individual by limiting their ability to engage in key life activities, such as employment and leisure pursuits.

People with spinal cord injuries (SCI) are particularly vulnerable to secondary conditions due to physical limitations and a sedentary lifestyle. Increased exercise and physical activity in people with SCI can lower the risk for developing secondary health conditions, especially urinary tract infection, pressure sores, and respiratory illness. It can also help manage problems with spasticity, weight gain, and chronic pain.

Supports
When considering health promotion interventions for people with SCI, consider the following supports:

- Focus counseling on developing a plan of action to overcome barriers impacting a commitment to engage in physical activity and exercise.
- Enhance self-efficacy related to physical activity and exercise, and reinforce the perceived benefits of physical activity and exercise to increase their commitment to a plan of action.
- Assist consumers with decision making, problem solving, and negotiating a balance between time demands of work-related (or job seeking) activities and physical activities.
- Assist employers with developing inclusive health programs and initiatives for employees that ensures full inclusion and accessibility for workers with disabilities.

Bottom Line
Exercise and physical activity reduce secondary conditions and functional limitations, and consequently promote job acquisition and retention. This study provided support for the use of Pender’s Health Promotion Model as a predictor of physical activity/exercise for people with SCI. This model can be a useful guide in the development of health promotion interventions for people with SCI.

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