

Water exercises are safer for spine

Question: I have a lumbar degenerative-disc condition and have trouble doing any walking or treadmill type cardiovascular exercise. What exercise would you suggest to maintain my cardiovascular health?

Answer: A non-weight bearing activity would best suit your degenerative-disc condition. The spinal discs act as cushions to compensate for gravity pushing down on our spines whether seated or standing. In degenerative disc conditions the discs wear down and reduce our natural abilities to withstand concussive forces either pushing upward or downward. Extended walking, sitting or any jolt to the spine can be a nightmare to patients exhibiting a lack of disc height between the vertebra. Exercising takes on a new challenge for the degenerative spine. Finding a way to stay in shape without irritating the condition is not easy. Some patients utilize recumbent bikes or elliptical motion equipment, which minimize weight bearing, but the best form of non-weight bearing exercise is water exercise. The water makes the spine buoyant and therefore removes the weight bearing off the spine. Aerobic activity is easier to perform and cardiovascular health can be maintained. Injured joints besides the spine can be isolated and rehabbed without weight bearing also. The Ocean County area has multiple facilities with pools that support these type programs. Many are designed specifically to assist the spine or promote cardiovascular health. Once you learn how to perform the exercise you can do it on your own if you have access to a pool.

Persistent low-back pain during exercise is a sign to discontinue. Ask your chiropractor if you qualify for this type of exercise before performing it to avoid injury.

Quote of the week: *“Don’t think that the way you are today is the way you’ll always be.”* - Vince Dooley