Ways to Maintain Your Independence With Lupus

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Keeping Independence With Lupus

No one likes to be too dependent on other people, but when your lupus flares up, you may not have a choice.

However, while you — like everyone — will need help from friends and family from time to time, having lupus does not mean you have to be dependent on everyone around you. The best way to maintain your independence with lupus is to manage the condition as well as you can.

Get Into Healthy Habits

Consider the following:

- **Educate yourself and those around you.** The more you know about lupus, the better you'll understand and, as a result, manage it. Learn about the disease, keep track of your flares and learn what your triggers are. Discuss anything you learn about lupus with the people in your life. This will help them to better support you.
- **Practice healthy lifestyle habits.** Be sure to exercise regularly and eat a healthy diet. Strive to get enough rest so your body recuperates. Abstain from alcohol since it is a natural depressant and can increase the severity of depression.
- **Stress management techniques.** Learn stress management techniques by seeing a mental health professional. You can learn progressive muscle relaxation, guided imagery techniques, and other methods to reduce lupus stress. This won't make your lupus symptoms go away, but it will help to alleviate many of them. Listening to soothing music, taking a relaxing walk, or warm bath are also ways to relax.
- **Do things you enjoy.** Even though lupus may limit some of your options, there are plenty of other things you can do for fun. Take time and enjoy those activities; life should still be enjoyable. It can be as simple as reading a book or volunteering for others.

Exercise

It's important to do what you can to keep your body moving to maintain your level of mobility and independence. Exercise is important, but some activities will aggravate symptoms.

Any plan to begin an exercise program should be discussed with a physician or physical therapist, who will know what you can do to maximize the results of the exercise regime without causing harm.

Activities like swimming, biking, and the elliptical machine will help tone muscles without aggravating inflamed joints, while any activity that is weight-bearing, such as walking and low-impact aerobics, will strengthen your bones so it reduces your risk for osteoporosis.

If your joints are swollen or your muscles are hurting, avoid or limit the activities that would be demanding on the

affected joints and muscles. If you find yourself tiring easily, try to pace yourself — you don't want to overdo it and wear yourself out.

Any exercise is better than none, and consistently doing some kind of activity, whatever you can manage, will keep your muscles from becoming weak and help your extremities maintain their range of motion.