



Limited evidence for exercise in smoking cessation

Clinical question

How effective are exercise-based interventions for smoking cessation?

Bottom line

Three studies showed significantly higher abstinence rates in a physically active group versus a control group at the end of treatment. One of these studies also showed a significant benefit for exercise versus control on abstinence at the 3-month follow-up and a benefit for exercise of borderline significance ($p=0.05$) at the 12-month follow-up. One study showed significantly higher abstinence rates for the exercise group versus a control group at the 3-month follow-up but not at the end of treatment or 12-month follow-up. The other studies showed no significant effect for exercise on abstinence.

Caveat

Only one of the 15 trials offered evidence for exercise aiding smoking cessation at a 12-month follow-up. All the other trials were too small (7 had fewer than 25 people in each treatment arm) to reliably exclude an effect of intervention, or included an exercise intervention which was insufficiently intense to achieve the desired level of exercise. The studies varied in the timing and intensity of the smoking cessation and exercise programmes.

Context

Taking regular exercise may help people give up smoking by moderating nicotine withdrawal and cravings, and by helping to manage weight gain.

Cochrane Systematic Review

Ussher MH et al. Exercise interventions for smoking cessation. Cochrane Reviews, 2012, Issue 1. Article No. CD002295. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD002295.pub4. *This review contains 15 studies involving 4419 participants.*

PEARLS No. 357, March 2012, written by Brian R McAvoy.

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