

REHABILITATION TIPS

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It is four in the afternoon and patients are arriving from work or school or home. They are going to participate in another rehabilitation session today. Some are young; some are old. They are all ages, shapes, and sizes, some convalescing from an illness, some from injury or an operation. Every patient is different. All have unique demands and desires to be helped, and it's the little ones who cry out for it most, because they are just beginning, growing, developing, and don't even know that they are patients.

Children with Inherited Juvenile Neuro / Metabolo / Musculoskeletal Disorders can be fun and challenging to rehabilitate. It is especially fun when you can create the right atmosphere and environment. Yes, I know it hurts sometimes. There's some pain, and you're tired of trying all the time, but another fun part is when you smile while you enjoy different kinds of recreational activities. And it doesn't stop there because the fun part also includes the good feeling the body gets after the first few minutes. Sometimes the heat pads feel good, and the electric muscle stimulation tickles, while the cold packs cause a chill down your spine or leg. The challenging part is to do your best at all times. To put the body to the test, for example, like lifting as much as you can, running fast on the treadmill, jumping as high as you can, kicking a football or soccer ball or while standing tall and compensating for any problem that exists. The patients are divided into levels 1 - 4, the lower numbers are for the beginner, initial, and the higher numbers for the more skilled and advanced. All patients at our facility receive therapy modalities (ultrasound, moist heat, electric muscle stimulation) as needed, flexibility (passive, assistive, active) and then therapeutic / recreational / exercises.

There are a variety of exercises. Some are more involved and complex, while others are plain and simple. With the use of open kinetic chain and closed kinetic chain exercises, progressive resistance training is used through a pain free full range of motion on specialized selectorized cable machines, free weights, and elastic bands. Examples of each are push-ups, leg press, bench press (open) and leg lifts, leg extensions, (closed) Therapeutic balls are used for some fun and challenging exercises.

Treadmills, stationary bicycles, crosstrainers, stairclimbers, are used for speed training, gait training, and agility training. Plyometric exercises are

given to advanced individuals who are capable of performing these complex maneuvers. The frequency, intensity, duration, and mode are varied and determined according to each person's capabilities. The goals are to improve endurance, power, strength, agility, balance, coordination, muscle flexibility, and joint range of motion.

It is important to create a team of caring individuals. All of the health care professionals, the pediatrician, the orthopedist, physical/occupational therapist, and rehabilitation specialist, have to be aware of what each one is doing, and must inform one another of any changes or have brief consultations.

The real benefit from a well-planned program comes from the increased activity level and quality in their everyday lives. There is no limit to the things patients can do given the right set of circumstances and given the opportunity to participate in creative and diverse skilled activities.

Richard Yaldizian, MD, known as "Dr. Rich" to his patients.

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