Working out while getting over a cold? [1]

Dear Alice,

Is it ok to work out while getting over a cold?

Answer

Dear Reader,

Regular exercise is good for the body and mind ? and can also boost your immune system! But what to do when germs already have you down? Here are a couple rules of thumb:

Are your symptoms above or below the neck?

- **Above the neck??** if you have symptoms like a runny nose, watery eyes, a mild sore throat, or other symptoms of a mild cold, it is generally ok to exercise. Listen to your body ? if you feel up to a light work out, go for it.
- **Below the neck??** if you have symptoms like chest congestion or tightness, muscle aches, cough, or nausea, hold off. Exercise may do more harm than good, no matter how exercise-ready you feel. Monitor these symptoms closely, get plenty of rest, hydration, and if you?re not starting to feel better, set an appointment with you health care provider.

If you have ?above the neck? symptoms, and want to get in a light workout, some of your best options are walking, jogging, qi gong, yoga, or other low-intensity activities. In general, try to exercise at a lower intensity than your normal routine ? less weight and more reps, jog or cycle at a slower pace, etc.

Try to avoid gyms or group settings, where you may be exposed to more germs and spread the germs you are carrying to others. As an alternative, try to workout at home with body weight exercises or personal equipment.

Here are some additional ways to keep yourself healthy when you work out:

- **Drink up!** Hydration is key when you are sweating. If you become dehydrated your mucous membranes also dry up and are more susceptible to infection.
- **Re-Fuel!** Exercise will burn up calories faster than normal ? and calories are your
primary source of energy. Eat a healthy post-workout snack with both carbohydrates and protein to make sure your body can continue to work efficiently, even after your sweat session is over.

- **Get your R&R!** Rest and recovery is just as important as your regular workout. Balance training days with regular rest days so your body can recover from tough workouts and perform at its peak.

- **Get out of those sweaty gym clothes!** Sweating helps your body regulate temperature?as you heat up from exercise, sweat cools you down. But staying in cool, damp clothing post-workout is not ideal. Ditch the sweaty spandex and opt for drier, warmer options.

- **Wash your hands!** The signs in the bathroom are not just for employees?everyone benefits from hand washing [2]. Even at the gym. Sharing weights, mats, and even using the water fountain are all ways you can spread germs and pick up germs. Do yourself and your gym-mates a favor and wash your hands thoroughly and frequently.

If you are feeling under the weather, keep track of your symptoms and exercise in moderation. If you notice increased congestion, coughing or wheezing, it?s a good idea to make an appointment with a health care provider. More serious symptoms include chest tightness or pressure, trouble breathing, dizziness, or difficulty with balance. If you experience any of these symptoms, stop exercise and seek emergency medical attention right away.

Hope this helps!

Alice!

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