REGULAR EXERCISE CAN improve mood, help to manage weight and cholesterol, boost energy and concentration, decrease stress, and improve strength and endurance. For patients with a primary immunodeficiency disease (PI), knowing the benefits of exercise, or recalling the enjoyment of athletic pursuits prior to diagnosis but feeling too physically limited to stay active, can be frustrating and even discouraging. Finding an acceptable exercise regimen while battling the fatigue and physical limitations that accompany chronic illness may be challenging, but it is not impossible, if you follow suggested guidelines.

Safety First
Before embarking on any new exercise program, always consult with your doctor. Depending on your physical condition, your doctor might recommend specific exercises designed to reduce pain or build strength. Other considerations include how long your exercise sessions can be and what level of intensity is safe. You may also want to consult with a physical or occupational therapist who can provide specific guidelines to help you avoid injury.

Exercise for Peace of Mind
The benefits of exercise are universal, but a recent study found that regular exercise relieves anxiety in chronically ill patients and may help improve quality of life. In the study, researchers reviewed 40 previous studies published from 1995 to 2007 on the effects of exercise in nearly 3,000 people diagnosed with a variety of chronic illnesses. They found that in 90 percent of them, those who exercised regularly had fewer symptoms of anxiety such as feelings of worry, apprehension and nervousness than people who did not exercise.

Making It Fun
Many people avoid exercise because they perceive it as boring or tedious. To boost motivation, begin by making a list of activities you enjoy such as nature walks, dancing or even gardening. Be willing to think outside the box, too; for those who are less mobile, there are exercises and strength-training activities that can be performed while sitting, watching television or even lying down. If you’ve been sedentary for an extended period of time, simply walking the dog is a good way to get moving again. Other helpful tips include:

- Choose low-impact exercises. Low-impact activities are easier on your joints, back and knees. Consider exercises like walking on the treadmill, yoga, Pilates, weight training, low-impact circuit training and swimming.
- Keep an exercise journal. Log the activities you perform and how you feel before, during and after. If you find yourself overly exerted or particularly sore, take note and adjust your routine accordingly.
- Conserve your “spoons.” If you live with a PI, you have only so much energy to spend in one day. Don’t overextend yourself or plan too many activities on the days you plan to exercise. Remember to stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water, and take extra time to rest and recover.
- Eat to succeed. A diet full of processed foods can cause excess inflammation in the body, leading to muscle and joint pain, as well as fatigue. Consult with a nutritionist to see if there are dietary changes you can make to help you succeed with your fitness goals.

Patients with PI experience many fluctuations in their health, stamina and energy levels from day to day. While establishing a regular fitness routine is beneficial, always listen to your body and avoid overexertion if your symptoms flare. Some fitness experts suggest breaking your fitness regimen into short intervals repeated several times a day; consider three 10-minute activities spaced several hours apart, rather than attempting a full 30-minute workout that leaves you wiped out the rest of the day. Whether you are able to walk around the block or merely walk around the living room, moving a little each day will help you build stamina and endurance. Be proud of your accomplishments!

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Reference
**Thera-Band Resistance Bands**
Thera-Bands are the only resistive exercise bands endorsed by the American Physical Therapy Association. They offer progressive resistance to build upper- and lower-body strength and mobility for rehabilitation or fitness. The use of elastic resistance rather than weight-bearing exercises minimizes pressure on the joints and decreases the risk of injury. They can also be used while traveling, sitting at home or even in the office. $20, theraband.com

**Freedom2Move Home Exercise Program DVD**
The Freedom2Move home exercise program and video series was designed by a doctor of physical therapy to allow for everyone’s participation and physical betterment. It can be performed by serious athletes, individuals who live with a chronic health condition or those who are unable to move at all without assistance. Viewers get a customized workout and also learn about the targeted muscles, and how strengthening and conditioning them can lead to improved health and function. $19.99, freedom2move.org

**Swiss Ball**
Swiss exercise balls increase core balance and abdominal fitness. The Theragear Swiss Exercise Pro Ball features extra thick walls for durability during a workout and maximum firmness and support. If the ball is punctured, it will deflate safely and slowly. It is burst-proof up to 500 pounds and has a 2,200-pound static weight limit. $48.95, swissball.com

**Fitbit One Wireless Activity Plus Sleep Tracker**
The Fitbit One tracks steps, distance, calories burned and stairs climbed. At night, it measures an individual’s sleep cycle to help with better sleep. Stats upload wirelessly via computer or smartphone and allow individuals to set goals and track progress. Food, workouts and more can also be logged. $99.99, fitbit.com