

# WheelPower's Guide to An Active Life following Spinal Cord Injury



Name:



**WheelPower**

*British Wheelchair Sport*

# How can WheelPower support you?

WheelPower is the national charity for wheelchair sport, supporting people with physical disabilities of all ages to lead healthier and more active lives through movement, activity and sport.

WheelPower is here to help you to discover wheelchair sport and be more active through our calendar of events and online exercise programmes. Our team are also here to offer advice and support you to realise your sporting potential, whether you are a first timer or someone looking to return to sport.



Sport can develop confidence and improve fitness but it is also a great way to have fun and make friends. We have seen how playing sport can enrich lives, offering tremendous physical and psychological benefits, whatever your age or ability.

**1. [wheelpower.org.uk](http://wheelpower.org.uk)**

# Your WheelPower Physical Activity Advisor



We understand that following a life changing injury, being motivated to exercise and play sport can sometimes be difficult.

With the support of our WheelPower Physical Activity Advisors we will help you to move more, improve your physical and mental well-being, increase your fitness and discover the many benefits that regular exercise provides.

## How can our Advisors help you...

- They can call on their own personal experiences and knowledge as a wheelchair user to be a positive role model
- Provide advice about physical activity and wheelchair sport
- Deliver physical activity sessions with individuals and groups
- Use their local knowledge and experience to signpost you to external organisations to support the continuation of physical activity and sport following discharge



**2. [wheelpower.org.uk/physical-activity-advisors](https://www.wheelpower.org.uk/physical-activity-advisors)**

# Resistance Bands

The WheelPower Resistance Bands programme began in response to the pandemic in 2020, and to date, the gift of **FREE** bands has supported over 1,500 physically disabled people to stay active from their homes. The bands are great for warming up before exercising, strength training or physical therapy rehabilitation.

In a set of latex Resistance Bands you will find:

- Five bands of different colours/strengths
- Hand grips and ankle straps
- A door anchor

**Apply for a set today on the WheelPower website**



**SCAN  
ME**

**3. [wheelpower.org.uk/bands](http://wheelpower.org.uk/bands)**

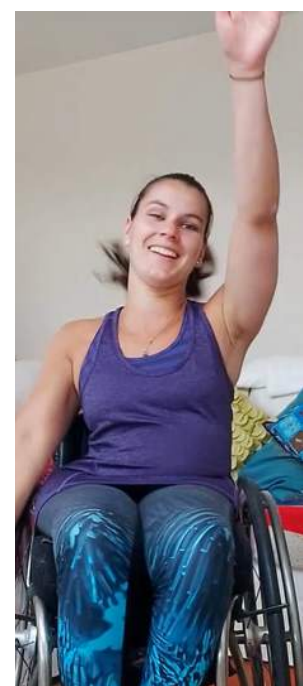
# Online Exercise Classes

WheelPower began delivering online exercise classes via Zoom during the Covid-19 pandemic. The first class took place in May 2020 and they continue to support disabled people across the UK to this day.

We currently host three FREE online exercise classes every week which vary between: yoga, cardio, adaptive box-fit, dance and tai chi.

The online classes are open to anyone with a physical disability wanting to maintain/improve their fitness from the comfort of their home.

**Scan the QR code  
to find out more**



**4. [wheelpower.org.uk/exercise-classes](https://wheelpower.org.uk/exercise-classes)**

# Online Exercise Videos



**Work out anywhere, anytime on any device!**

We have produced a range of fitness videos with your whole well-being in mind. You can get stronger, boost your energy and reduce stress with our online fitness experts.

Choose from a variety of wheelchair exercises classes like heart-rate boosting cardio, adaptive box-fit, wheelchair dance, tai chi and wheelchair yoga. We have everything you need to feel your best and improve your level of fitness online.

**We have over 50 videos available on our WheelPower YouTube Channel (@WheelPower Videos)**



**5. [wheelpower.org.uk/exercise-videos](https://wheelpower.org.uk/exercise-videos)**

# Wheelwrights Funding

The fund is available to anyone who has acquired a spinal cord injury within the past five years. You can apply for any equipment or activities to help you stay active or help you achieve your sporting potential.

Most grants made will be in the range of £100 to £1,000. Examples of grants include contributions to purchasing your own sports wheelchair or sport specific equipment. Other grants have included contributions to tennis lessons, competition entry fees or travel expenses to help you get to training sessions or competitions.



The funding has been made available through the Worshipful Company of Wheelwrights in partnership with National Tyre Distributors Association.

**6. [wheelpower.org.uk/wheelwrights](http://wheelpower.org.uk/wheelwrights)**

# Physical Activity after a Spinal Cord Injury

## What should I aim for each week?

### Step 1: Starting Goal

#### AEROBIC ACTIVITY

20 minutes  
2 x week



### Step 2: Progress Goal

#### AEROBIC ACTIVITY

30 minutes  
3 x week



Step 1 & 2 activities should be of moderate to vigorous intensity

#### STRENGTH ACTIVITY

3 Sets  
10 Reps  
2 x Week



#### STRENGTH ACTIVITY

3 Sets  
10 Reps  
2 x Week



Gradually increase load weight of strength activity

#### What are aerobic activities?

Continuous activities such as pushing, dancing, and arm cycling.

#### What are strength activities?

Activities using your body weight, resistance bands or weights to increase strength.

#### What is moderate to vigorous intensity?

Moderate intensity should feel somewhat hard, vigorous intensity should feel hard or very hard. Intensity infographic linked below.

Scan the QR code to find out more

Or visit:

[linktr.ee/physicalactivityaftersci](https://linktr.ee/physicalactivityaftersci)





# Benefits of Physical Activity after a Spinal Cord Injury

## Hospital to Home

At the Spinal Injuries Centre there are lots of ways to help keep you active, and this will help make the transition home easier. Ask your WheelPower Physical Activity Advisor or physiotherapist about:

- Weekly physical activity taster sessions
- ‘The Staying Healthy after a SCI’ education session
- Peer support meetings
- The Inter Spinal Unit Games



Before you leave hospital, speak with your healthcare team about how you can keep active at home.

## What can help me prepare?

A few weeks before you are discharged from hospital, chat to your physiotherapist about maintaining your rehabilitation. You can create a discharge pack together. Depending on your needs, this may contain:

- Assisted stretches
- Positioning examples
- Exercise pictures or videos of you performing your exercises

### Set goals before you go!

They continue beyond your time in hospital, and it is important to keep making new ones to continue to progress.

## Why should I keep active?

After a SCI you are at greater risk of developing health conditions such as diabetes, urinary tract infections, and obesity. Regular physical activity can help to reduce this risk, whilst improving health and fitness.



It can have a big impact on improving your quality of life, independence and function. This can then help improve your ability to do day-to-day tasks e.g. transferring in and out of the car. Physical activity gives you more energy and you may feel less tired throughout the day.

**Social:** Physical activity can get you out of the house. You can spend time with your friends or loved ones, or even meet new people. By joining a local sports club or gym, you can socialise with others.

**Health:** Reduced risk of developing health complications such as: diabetes, obesity, urinary tract infections, pressure sores, or respiratory illness. Also helps you to manage: spasticity, weight gain, pain, function.

**Mental Health:** Activity can help to reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety. It can lift your mood and improve your self-esteem. If you find an activity or sport that you enjoy, it can be fun.

## What is aerobic activity?

Aerobic activity is the continuous movement of the body. Depending on your level of injury, it may increase your heart rate, breathing and make you a bit warm and sweaty.



### Types of aerobic activity:

- Everyday activities such as housework, playing with your children, walking the dog, and gardening
- Walking or wheeling at the park, or commuting to work
- Sport such as badminton, cycling, and rugby
- Gym classes like body pump or home workouts online

## What is strength activity?

Strength activities involve using your body weight, resistance bands or weights to increase strength. Regular physical activity can help improve strength, mobility, fitness and balance.

### Types of strength activity:

- Everyday activities such as carrying your shopping, or digging in the garden
- Strengthening classes like yoga or pilates
- Traditional strength training such as squats, calf raises, chest press, bicep curl

**Scan the QR code to watch a video about the benefits of exercise for people with a SCI**



# HOW TO OVERCOME BARRIERS TO EXERCISE

Physical activity and exercise can help you become both physically and mentally fit.

Exercise can help improve health and well-being by improving mood, reducing stress and decreasing depression. It can also help boost your self-esteem and give you confidence in other areas of life. To gain these psychological benefits you must maintain a regular exercise routine but this isn't always easy. As a disabled person you may face a number of barriers to physical activity which can make becoming and staying active a real challenge.

Here are a few of the common barriers and how you can try to overcome them:



**Loughborough  
University**

Peter Harrison Centre  
for Disability Sport

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## ***"I really don't know where to start"***

The most important thing is to find an activity that you enjoy doing so that you will keep doing it. Join a friend at the gym, try an exercise class or head to the park with your family; adding a social element can make it much more fun. Don't be afraid of trying new and unfamiliar activities as these can often surprise you and leave you wanting more. Find some like-minded people to exercise with in your area, you will help motivate each other. Also visit [everybodymoves.org.uk](http://everybodymoves.org.uk) for information on what sports are available for disabled people and to help you find local sports clubs.

## ***"I just don't have the time"***

Many people live hectic lifestyles that are busy with both work and family commitments. Not having sufficient time to exercise is a genuine concern. Difficulties with travel can make your trip to an exercise venue annoyingly long or expensive and so it is important to consider where else you might be able to exercise. A long commute to your local gym is no longer needed if you can do a workout at your local park or even in your own home/garden. The amount of exercise you need to do to gain benefits is often overestimated too. As little as 30 minutes of moderate intensity activity a day, five times a week is enough to help you feel physically and mentally fit. Multiple bouts of at least 10 minutes are also just as good; how about before or

after work and a short session during your lunch hour?

## ***"My local facility isn't accessible"***

Accessibility is a common issue faced by disabled people. However, you do not necessarily need a gym or leisure centre to become more active. You can do lots of exercises with minimal equipment in many different environments such as in your home or at the park. However, if you do fancy the gym, the Inclusive Fitness Initiative (IFI) has an application where you can find a local club that has accessible equipment for disabled people. [activityalliance.org.uk/get-active/inclusive-gyms](http://activityalliance.org.uk/get-active/inclusive-gyms)

## ***"I feel too tired to exercise"***

If this sounds like you then consider when it is that you are most tired. If it's in the evening after work, then try to exercise in the early morning or during your lunch break. If you feel most fatigued first thing in the morning simply plan to do your exercise later in the day. These simple steps are common sense but will help you get started. It is also worth considering that regular exercise can actually reduce fatigue and help you sleep better. After a few weeks of regular physical activity you should notice your energy levels improve.

## ***"Because I've always been rubbish at exercise and sport"***

You may have disliked PE at school because of an emphasis on competitive sport, the group atmosphere, a lack of choice or that age-old classic of being picked last. It may be hard to forget these feelings but remember that as an adult you can choose exactly what type of exercise and/or sport you do, who you do it with, when and also whether you do it for leisure or competitively; you are in control! Finding a type of exercise that you enjoy will hopefully prolong your involvement.

# Find a Sport

There is a large variety of sports available to those with a spinal cord injury. Go to our website and click on the sport that you are interested in. You will find details of the National Governing Body who will assist you in finding a local club.

All

Water Sports

Paralympic Sports

Active Lifestyle

Team Sports

Winter Sports



Active Partnerships can also help you to source a local club or coach. There is an Active Partnership based within every county in England.

[www.activepartnerships.org/active-partnerships](http://www.activepartnerships.org/active-partnerships)

A further great resource to help you to find local clubs is the website [www.everybodymoves.org.uk](http://www.everybodymoves.org.uk)

**13. [wheelpower.org.uk/sports](http://wheelpower.org.uk/sports)**

# Inter Spinal Unit Games



The Inter Spinal Unit Games is held annually at Stoke Mandeville Stadium and it forms an essential part of many spinal patients' rehabilitation.

Patients from 15 spinal units across the UK and Ireland are invited to compete in taster session and sporting events. The event regularly attracts at least 20 different sports that include Wheelchair Rugby, Athletics, Table Tennis, Handcycling, Tennis, Fencing, Basketball, Powerlifting, Rowing, Curling and Archery.



**Ask your Physical Activity Advisor or Physiotherapist about how you can get involved.**

**14. [wheelpower.org.uk/inter-spinal-unit-games](http://wheelpower.org.uk/inter-spinal-unit-games)**

# WheelPower Annual Events Calendar



WheelPower hosts events throughout the UK. Our one day Sport Festivals are a great place to start and are suitable for anyone with a physical disability to discover sport. We also have regular 'Learn to' events. These events vary each year but will include sports such as skiing, golf and handcycling.

<b>January</b>	<b>WheelPower Sports Festival (Yorkshire)</b>
<b>February</b>	<b>WheelPower Sports Festival (Wiltshire)</b>
<b>March</b>	<b>WheelPower Sports Festival (Merseyside)</b>
<b>April / May</b>	<b>Learn to Events with WheelPower</b>
<b>June</b>	<b>Learn to Handcycle with WheelPower</b>
<b>June</b>	<b>National Junior Games</b>
<b>September</b>	<b>Inter Spinal Unit Games</b>
<b>October</b>	<b>WheelPower Sports Festival (Scotland/Wales)</b>
<b>November</b>	<b>WheelPower Sports Festival (London)</b>
<b>December</b>	<b>WheelPower Sports Festival (Buckinghamshire)</b>

**15.**     [wheelpower.org.uk/sport-events](http://wheelpower.org.uk/sport-events)



# Engaging Wheelchair Participants In Sport

If you are a teacher, coach, sports student, physiotherapist, or occupational therapist striving to adapt your sports session for wheelchair participants, then this training is for you.

We understand that there are many people in our community working with people with physical disabilities. This short online course is here to give you the knowledge and confidence in your own organisation.



## Learning Outcomes

- Learn about the wide range of sports available to wheelchair users across the UK
- Explore different ways of including disabled people in wheelchair sports, using practical examples across a number of sports
- Develop confidence in working with and supporting disabled people to enjoy, participate and access sport, activity and movement opportunities

**16. [wheelpower.org.uk/online-training](https://wheelpower.org.uk/online-training)**

# My Personal Goals

Type of physical activity I enjoyed prior to injury:

Current readiness for activity:

Available resources (resistance bands, local gym/sports clubs, funding)

Barriers to undertaking exercise

**Action Plan:**

**Date:**

# Notes

*My Physical Activity Advisor is:*

*Email:*

# Useful Websites

Spinal Injuries Association	<a href="http://spinal.co.uk">spinal.co.uk</a>
Aspire	<a href="http://aspire.org.uk">aspire.org.uk</a>
Back Up	<a href="http://backuptrust.org.uk">backuptrust.org.uk</a>
Spinal Injuries Scotland	<a href="http://spinalinjuriesScotland.org.uk">spinalinjuriesScotland.org.uk</a>
Disability Sport NI	<a href="http://dsni.co.uk">dsni.co.uk</a>
Disability Sport Wales	<a href="http://disabilitysportwales.com">disabilitysportwales.com</a>
Scottish Disability Sport	<a href="http://scottishdisabilitysport.com">scottishdisabilitysport.com</a>
Every Body Moves	<a href="http://everybodymoves.org.uk">everybodymoves.org.uk</a>



[wheelpower.org.uk](http://wheelpower.org.uk)

**Movement** | **Activity** | **Sport**

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