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Achieving Successful Outcomes in Physical Therapy

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INTRODUCTION

- Role of physical therapy/physical therapist
- Advocating for yourself
- Role of *exercise* in maintaining health
- Focus areas particular to EDS in physical therapy
- Studies



ROLE OF PHYSICAL THERAPY

- What is the purpose of physical therapy?
 - Therapeutic
 - Goals
 - Outcome-based
 - Not maintenance-based



WHAT IS A PHYSICAL THERAPIST?

- Physical Therapist defined
- Licensed healthcare professional
- Bachelor, Master and/or Doctoral degrees
- Referred from doctor or direct access to services
- Maintains important working relationship with the patient and other healthcare professionals



PHYSICAL THERAPIST'S UNDERSTANDING OF EDS

- A good physical therapist...
 - ...may have never seen EDS, but will research and learn about the syndrome.
 - ...may have seen EDS in the past, but will research it again to refresh knowledge of syndrome.
 - ...understands each patient will have different symptoms of EDS.
 - ...will not offer a “cookie-cutter” approach to treatment.
 - ...understands the challenges of EDS and how they will affect the condition(s) for which the patient is being seen.



HOW TO SELF-ADVOCATE

- It is your (and your parents') responsibility to advocate for yourself
- Communicate to healthcare professional all information that is pertinent to treatment
- YOU are part of your care
- Assure your voice is being heard
- You have the right to change physical therapists
- Ask questions to be satisfied that the PT understands the condition
- Respect the input of the PT



IMPORTANCE OF EXERCISE

- Exercise is essential and needed on a regular basis to build and maintain a healthy body
- Benefits of exercise



EXERCISE AND EDS

- Delicate balance of how much exercise is to be performed
- After therapy, need to maintain gains
- Prevention of injury through strengthening of joints
- Be cautious of increasing levels of exercise and intensity
- Be successful before you progress
- Make exercise functional so it positively impacts your daily activities



FOCUS AREAS OF EDS IN PHYSICAL THERAPY

- Things to avoid in PT/exercise
 - High impact activities which place pressure on joints
 - Activities that place pressure on locked joints
 - Weights that cause joint distraction or joint strain
 - Strenuous and continued work
 - Speedy activities



PROPER METHODS OF ACTIVITIES WITH EDS

- Best to do in PT/exercise
 - Low impact activities
 - Muscle training
 - Stronger muscles control and prevent joint hyperextension
 - Theraband
 - Isometrics for joints that have pain for treatment
 - Will strengthen joints without movement
 - Pilates
 - Aquatics



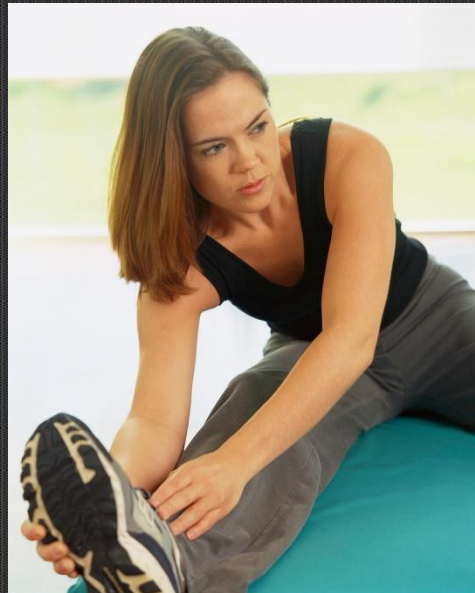
AQUATICS

- Aquatic exercise
 - Decreases joint forces
 - Neck level is 10% of body weight
 - Resistance without distraction
 - Warm water relaxes muscles



STRETCHING

- When stretching, it is important to...
 - Stretch tight muscles to allow for full range of motion
 - Avoid overstretching
 - Support the joint, not increase it's laxity



BRACING OVER JOINTS

- Bracing = good and bad
 - Needed for joints that are overly lax
 - Protects joint integrity to prevent injury
 - Prevents natural strengthening of joints by not allowing muscles to be trained to act as a brace for support
 - Example of lifting belt



WEIGHT GAIN WITH EDS

- Decrease weight gain
 - Weight increase joint forces
 - Weight adds stress to already weakened ligaments
 - Joints are more prone to injury



OSTEOPOROSIS AND EDS

- Risk of Osteoporosis is increased
- Essential to do activities that will decrease risk
 - Weight bearing activities
 - Strength training
 - Exclude forceful movements from exercise regimen



POSTURE

- Weakened ligaments and muscles contribute to poor posture
- Poor posture leads to other problems at other joints
- Imbalance of laxity and tightness in spine can cause structural imbalance
- Poor posture can lead to back pain or other joint pain



JOINT PROTECTION

- Joint protection is needed
- How can a patient achieve joint protection?
- Maintain good muscle support of joints, good postural stability and control of weight gain.



PROPRIOCEPTION

- Proprioception – knowing where the body is in space
- EDS patients have a decreased sense of joint position
- Result of nerve tissue being affected
- Need to incorporate proprioceptive exercise into physical therapy
- Example of carrying laundry on stairs
- Placement of foot in exercise without watching during exercises



A FEW POINTS TO REMEMBER...

- Body mechanics
- Joint protection
- Lifestyle modifications
- Avoid protecting one joint – this can lead to overload on another joint



PATIENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- Let the PT know how you respond to therapy
- Follow the directions of the PT
- Consistently perform home exercise program as prescribed by PT
- Follow doctor recommendations
- Continue with exercise following completion of therapy
- Don't ignore issues, they will only grow bigger!



SUMMARY

- Be your own advocate!
- Communicate with your doctor and PT
- Perform regular exercise
- Maintain balance of stretching and strengthening
- Vary exercises
- Avoid joint stresses
- Functional exercises are important



REFERENCES

- *Complete Information on Ehlers-danlos Syndrome With Treatment and Prevention.* <http://www.articlesbase.com/diseases-and-conditions-articles/complete-information-on-ehlersdanlos-syndrome-with-treatment-and-prevention-432418.html>
- Kosur, Heather Marie. *Treatment of Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome: Joint Hypermobility and Physical Therapy.* <http://www.brighthub.com/health/alternative-medicine/articles/25290.aspx>

