

RISK AND ACCESSIBILITY FOR EXERCISE CLASSES

Exercise instructors and facilities are encouraged to use the following accessibility checklist and procedures to create an inclusive environment for participants.

The **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** is more extensive than what will be covered here – please refer to the ADA website for additional accessibility guidance. The recommendations below are designed to encourage participant accessibility and should not imply that an exercise class or facility is conforming to the ADA or any other federal, state, or local law or regulation. Further, the National Multiple Sclerosis Society does not make any warranties or representations in regard to the completeness, reliability and accuracy of the information contained herein nor is the National Multiple Sclerosis Society in anyway responsible for your use of these guidelines.

COMMUNITY EXERCISE AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PROGRAMS

- Encourage all fitness professionals involved in your facility and program to take this training.
- Use our accessibility manual and recommendations below to determine site accessibility.
- Only disclose the diagnosis of an individual living with MS when the person has provided explicit written authorization to do so.

FACILITY WALK-THROUGH

Consider recruiting class participants or potential participants as volunteers for a facility walk-through so you understand the environment from their perspective; this may include individuals who use various mobility devices including walkers, canes or wheelchairs. Participant volunteers can provide insight into their cognitive and other symptoms and how they view the environment, such as if signage is clear, writing is large enough, etc.

You may find your venue is accessible but with a few caveats, like which elevator or parking spots are best, what items should be added (such as lining the walkway with chairs for breaks) or which items should be moved (for example, a large plant partially blocking a hallway).

ACCESSIBILITY CHECKLIST AND BEST PRACTICES

PARKING

Ensure there is a reserved parking area with accessible spaces that are conveniently located near the facility entrance, understand where and how many spaces are available, also know if and where a large lift-equipped van is best suited to park. Below are our recommendations:

- 1-15 spaces - 1 accessible space
- 26-50 spaces - 2 accessible spaces
- 51-74 spaces - 3 accessible spaces
- 76-100 spaces - 4 accessible spaces
- There should never be less than 2% of all spaces reserved for accessible spaces.

ACCESSIBILITY CHECKLIST AND BEST PRACTICES (CONTINUED)

BUILDING ACCESS

- Is there a main path of travel that does not require the use of stairs?
- Is the main path stable, firm and slip-resistant?
- Can all objects protruding into the main path be detected by a person with a visual disability using a cane?
- Do the doors have a clear opening of at least 32 inches?
- Can the doors be opened with a closed fist?
- If there is not an accessible main entrance, are there clear directions indicating the nearest accessible entrance?

RESTROOMS

- Do the doors open out and have a clear opening of 32 inches?
- Can the doors be opened and closed with a closed fist?
- Are the handles no higher than 48 inches?
- Are the accessible bathrooms easily located with clear signage?
- Does a wheelchair-accessible toilet stall have an area of at least 5 feet by 5 feet and clearance of door swing?
- Do accessible toilet stalls have horizontal grab bars installed on the wall behind and on the sidewall nearest the toilet?
- In accessible restrooms, are soap, other dispensers, towels and hand dryer no higher than 48 inches from the floor?

POOL

- Is water temperature between 80 and 84 degrees Fahrenheit?
- Do the steps into the pool have handrails on both sides?
- Do the steps have treads with slip-resistant finish?
- Is the pool equipped with a mechanical chairlift that allows the client to transfer from wheelchair to water safely?
- Are there staff available to assist in transfers?
- Are there accessible changing facilities close to the pool?

ACCESSIBILITY CHECKLIST AND BEST PRACTICES (CONTINUED)

HEAT EXHAUSTION GUIDELINES

Heat can cause a temporary worsening of MS-related symptoms for many people; this can result from an increase in core temperature from exercise or a hot day. Symptoms of heat exhaustion includes:

- Dizziness
- Rapid heartbeat
- Diarrhea/cramps
- Nausea
- Throbbing headaches
- Dry skin (no sweating)
- Chest pain
- Great weakness
- Breathing problems
- Mental confusion
- Elevated temperature

MITIGATING STRATEGIES

Understanding how to mitigate and recognize signs of heat stress is important and includes:

- Wearing lightweight, loose, breathable clothing and using cooling products like cooling vests, neck wraps or a bandana during exercise.
- Encouraging participants to bring a cold drink, preferably water, to class and know where the closest water fountain is to your class.
- Having seats available for participants to take breaks as needed.

GENERAL FIRST AID RECOMMENDATIONS

Should a participant experience signs of overheating, then you should gain their consent to contact a medical professional, send someone to contact that professional and:

- Move the person to a cool place.
- If able, have them lie on their back with feet elevated.
- Fan the person and if available, sponge with cool water.
- Offer ½ glass of water every 15 minutes.