



Exercise Referral Programme: Protocol for Health Professionals

Healthwise – Exercise Referral Programme

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What is the Healthwise Exercise Referral Programme?

The Healthwise Exercise Referral Programme is designed to help people **with long-term conditions** to start exercising safely. Health professionals (GPs, Practice Nurses, Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists, and Dieticians etc.) can refer suitable patients to the scheme to take part in physical activity sessions to receive specialist advice and support, helping them to overcome barriers to exercise and become more physically active.

Registering with Exercise Referral Programme

To access the exercise referral sessions a referral form is required. This enables our specifically trained coordinator and instructors to set programmes with the appropriate type and intensity of exercise, as well as specific guidance on exercise considerations due to their medical condition(s). Health professionals can sign up for the exercise referral programme by initially completing a “Health Professional Sign Up” form and then completing a referral form for each patient to be referred into the programme.

When is a referral appropriate?

A referral may be the most appropriate course of action when the patient is likely to need help with motivation, programming, supervision, monitoring and/or choice of duration, frequency, intensity and type of physical activity to attain specific health outcomes.

Inclusion criteria

Exercise referral instructors are able to support patients with the following medical conditions.

- Cardiovascular disease risk factors including hypertension and hypercholesterolemia.
- Respiratory conditions such as COPD and asthma.
- Musculoskeletal conditions: joint replacement, simple non-mechanical low back pain, rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis, osteoporosis.
- Mental health: mild to moderate depression, general anxiety, stress.
- Metabolic conditions: type 1 diabetes, type 2 diabetes, obesity.

There are also specialist schemes for the following.

- Phase IV cardiac rehabilitation.
- Neurological conditions, e.g. multiple sclerosis and Parkinson’s disease.
- Cancer rehabilitation and post treatment.
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

There is a strong evidence base for a specific exercise intervention to help manage or improve either the pathogenesis or symptoms of the above conditions and higher level qualifications are held by instructors working within the specialist schemes mentioned above.



Exclusion criteria

Patients are not eligible for exercise referral if they have the following.

- Resting heart rate > 100 bpm.
- Systolic blood pressure > 180mmHg or diastolic blood pressure > 100mmHg.
- Recent electrocardiogram changes suggesting recent myocardial infarction.
- Febrile illness.
- Significant drop in blood pressure during exercise.
- Pain, dizziness or excessive breathlessness on exertion.
- Uncontrolled arrhythmia, hypertension and/or diabetes.
- Unstable angina.
- Acute aortic dissection.
- Acute myocarditis or pericarditis.
- Acute pulmonary embolus or pulmonary infarction.
- Suspected or known dissecting aneurysm.
- Acute infections.
- Uncontrolled visual or vestibular disturbances.
- Recent injurious fall without medical assessment.

Eligibility

To be eligible for acceptance on the scheme patients should:

- Be currently physically inactive or have low levels of physical activity
- Have one or more medical conditions covered by the inclusion criteria of the scheme and no conditions or contraindications that would exclude them from the scheme.

Referral Process

Health professional identifies patient who is inactive and has medical condition(s) covered by the exercise referral scheme. Ensures patient agrees to referral. Completes referral form (including informed consent and relevant medical information) and sends to Healthwise exercise referral programme (via email or post)



Administrator receives referral and adds to database.



Coordinator conducts consultation with patient and recommends appropriate exercise programme.



Coordinator conducts consultation with patient and recommends appropriate exercise programme.



Instructor prepares and delivers exercise programme for patient. Supports patient, monitors exercise response and reviews programme appropriately.



Patient receives follow up at 3, 6 and 12 months from exercise referral coordinator



Roles within exercise referral programme

- “*Administrator*” – receives the referrals, enters patient’s information on to database, and sends out information to patients following their consultation with coordinator.
- “*Coordinator*” – qualified exercise referral instructor who undertakes initial consultation, provides on-going support and acts as a central contact point for all questions regarding the scheme (from instructors and health professionals).
- “*Instructor*” – qualified exercise referral instructor who leads the physical activity sessions,
- “*Health Professional*” – those who refer into the exercise referral programme and who have a clinical/medical training.

Initial consultation

An initial consultation is carried out by an exercise referral qualified programme coordinator, usually via the telephone. The purpose of the initial consultation is to:

- explain and discuss the exercise referral programme and process
- confirm patients consent
- establish goals - **both short and long term**
- identify barriers and motivators
- review health and medical history and implications of medications on exercise and any **side effects**
- outline the purpose of assessments, the exercise programme and risks/ benefits of becoming more active
- explain responsibilities of the patient.

Exercise opportunities

Within the scheme there are opportunities for patients to be referred into gym based programmes, community classes or specific classes for conditions such as cancer, COPD and neurological conditions. A current list of sessions can be found on the website (address on front page of this booklet).

Monitoring adherence

Patients are monitored throughout the period of referral. Adherence is monitored and any non-attendance followed up. Various techniques are used to identify potential barriers and to motivate patients to continue to be physically active.

Programme review

The programme is reviewed continuously by the qualified exercise referral instructor and overseen by the exercise referral coordinator.



Exit strategy

All programmes are designed to encourage patients to increase activity levels on their own and to continue to be physically active long term. Patients are monitored over a year long period, to offer support and guidance if required in order to facilitate long term behaviour change and adherence to a more physically active lifestyle.

An important part of the initial consultation is to understand a patient's aims and goals. The exercise programme is designed to assist the patient to become active regularly so as to realise the wider health benefits of increased levels of physical activity (social, mental and physical).

The gyms used for exercise referral allow patients to take out memberships at discounted rates if desired. Most of the classes allow patients to keep attending on an ongoing basis.

Follow up

Patients are contacted two weeks after their first activity session to check they have attended and are satisfied with the activity. They are then contacted at 3, 6 and 12 months post referral to check on adherence and activity levels.

Medical legal responsibility

Clinical responsibility remains with the health professional. Responsibility for safe and effective management, design and delivery of the exercise programme rests with the coordinator/instructor.

There must be a 'meaningful transfer of relevant information' to the exercise referral programme. Responsibility to do this remains with the referrer who must make a professional judgement as to what information must be disclosed to the exercise referral coordinator and instructor to enable him or her to tailor a safe and effective exercise programme that meets the need of the patient.

Responsibility for pre-exercise assessment, and reference back to the referrer, remains with the exercise referral coordinator.

Responsibility to consenting to take part in the exercise programme, and adhering to its design and guidance, remains with the patient (or consenting guardian or carer).

Questions relating to this document

Please contact the Healthwise Exercise Referral Programme coordinator on:

Email: healthwiseyork@gll.org

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