

Physical Activity and Nutrition in People with Neurological Causes of Disability:

Understanding and Enhancing the Impact

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Extensive evidence is now emerging regarding the important roles that nutrition and physical activity play in the improvement in functional status and quality of life among people with stroke, traumatic brain injury, spinal cord injury, and other neurological conditions. Physical activity and exercise have the potential to favorably influence multiple diverse physical and psychosocial outcomes after onset of stroke, brain injury, or spinal cord dysfunction. The impact of nutrition on function and outcome among people with neurological disability is more difficult to study and so is less well understood, but some investigations suggest an association between nutritional factors and functional status. However, despite compelling evidence regarding the roles of nutrition and physical activity in enhancing quality of life among people with neurological causes of disability, surprisingly small numbers of professionals make appropriate nutritional and exercise recommendations, and even smaller numbers of people with disabilities adhere to those recommendations. Many factors limit the extent to which professionals have developed practice guidelines, clinicians have made recommendations, and people with disabilities have adopted appropriate behavior changes in the past. Understanding the rationale and adhering to guidelines for professional practice and personal behaviors regarding nutrition and physical activity can be expected to enhance quality of life among people with disabling conditions in the future.