



Glynis Barber *Should you exercise when ill?*

Our natural guru delves into
this tricky issue

I always wonder about this whenever I'm under the weather, which thankfully isn't very often.

However I've just had a bad virus which turned into a chest infection and this has seriously interrupted my fitness regime. I love exercise and try to get moving about five to six times a week, even if it's just a short walk. I'm never happy when something gets in the way of this as I find that exercise keeps me feeling healthy and calm.

Now, there are some times where it's quite obvious you shouldn't keep working out furiously. There was no way I could have done so during the week I was at home in my PJs with a fever and a wheezing chest. In fact, there were days I couldn't even watch the TV or read. However, what about the following week when I started to slowly rejoin the human race? It seemed clear to me that while I continued to cough continuously, exercise was not a good idea. When I felt a little stronger I began to take short walks. And at times like this, walking really is one of the best things to do.

But what do the professionals think? The common wisdom is that if the symptoms are above the neck then it's ok to exercise. These would include sneezing, a sore throat, headache, runny nose and nasal congestion.

Getting a little heated from exercise helps to kill some viruses so it turns out that exercising with a cold may actually be a good thing. Even going to the gym and doing a light workout could be beneficial. I have to say, however, that I would feel a bit guilty going to the gym with a heavy cold and spreading my germs around. Gyms are not the cleanest places as it is!

The big caveat is that exercise should be done at a lower intensity. Keep in mind too that your normal workout routine, which causes you to breathe heavily, sweat and feel some discomfort, awakens a stress response in the body. A healthy body easily adapts to this, but the stress may be too much when we're sick. The immune system is already working hard to help you get better and you don't want to compromise it. It's therefore much better to stick to a low intensity workout rather than a high intensity one. What that is will very much depend on your personal fitness levels.

Remember too, that there are times you should absolutely NOT exercise, such as when you have a fever, chest infection, vomiting, a stomach upset or fatigue.

The most important thing to do is listen to your body. And sometimes it's just good to rest.

Glynis Barber is an actress, co-author of *The In-Sync Diet* and founder of agelessbyglynisbarber.com

TOP TIPS

1. Good low intensity or non strenuous workouts include walking, low intensity bike riding, gardening and hatha yoga.
2. Workouts to avoid when ill are team sports, hot yoga or bikram, sprinting, HIT training, endurance training and heavy strength training.
3. Maintaining a moderate exercise regime when healthy will improve your immune system. Not working out at all, or working out too much or too hard, will adversely affect the immune system.
4. Working out after minor surgery can have a very beneficial effect and aid a speedy recovery. It's important to discuss this with your surgeon first however.
5. If you suffer from joint pain or osteoarthritis then keeping moving is good as it prevents further stiffness, strengthens muscles, increases flexibility and bone density.

