

Jenni Parkin, Neuro Physiotherapist D&G

I started curling after spending eight years watching my sons play. Both were academic rather than sporty, so it was great to get them into a team sport which challenged the mind as well as the body. It has been described as chess on ice. It is a game which has no barriers. Nine year olds play with ninety year olds. Every ability is catered for. If you can't get down to slide out, you can deliver the stone with a stick; if you struggle to balance, you can use a wheelchair. There's no excuse! And everybody plays on the same team. There aren't many team sports where that happens. For that reason I have always encouraged my patients to try curling. Many people with MS struggle exercising in high temperatures so curling is ideal. Wheelchair curlers don't sweep so fatigue isn't as much of an issue as in other team sports. Curling is a game of strategy and tactics so it will definitely get the grey matter working, and more fun than crosswords. Sometimes it can be hard to motivate yourself to get out or exercise, especially in the Winter months, but if it is a team sport like curling, you have others to keep you motivated.

I've been curling for four years and love it. It's fun, sociable but be warned, very addictive. Most ice rinks in Scotland will have curling sessions and many will have wheelchairs to borrow if you don't have your own. If you are in the North West of England, the Flower Bowl is opening soon at Barton Grange near Preston where you can curl too. If you can't get along to the MS sessions, google try-curling and go along to a session near you.

As a physiotherapist I'm delighted that the MS Society is promoting being active. Every piece of research lauds exercise as the magic bullet to improve not only the obvious balance, co-ordination, strength and mobility, but also to improve mental health and reduce fatigue. However, not everyone wants to work out in a gym, including me. With Multiple Sclerosis it is so important to remain as fit and active as you can possibly be. That is why it is so important to find a form of exercise you enjoy which will keep you fit, physically and mentally. If you enjoy it, you are more likely to keep it up. So go along to the sessions organised by the MS Society and see what you enjoy and what fits into your lifestyle.

So, curling, great for the body and the brain. What's stopping you? Come along and try it!.

