Interdisciplinary Approach: Spaceflight Human Optimization and Performance

Corey Twine, MS, SCCCa, CSCS
Strength Conditioning & Rehabilitation Specialist (ASCR)
KBR/NASA
Johnson Space Center, Houston, TX

Danielle Anderson Lt Col, USAF, BSC
DPT, DSc, OCS, CSCS, FAAOMPT
Musculoskeletal Medicine and Rehabilitation Lead
Johnson Space Center, Houston, TX

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Agenda

Welcome and Opening Remarks

- Introduction of speakers and session objectives

1.Multisystem Deconditioning in Spaceflight

- Physiological, anatomical, and performance domains
- Cardiovascular, muscular, bone, tendon/ligament, cartilage, spinal, and sensorimotor changes

2.Exercise Countermeasures on the ISS

- ARED – Resistance training protocols and Sprint Study findings
- CEVIS & T2 – Cardiovascular conditioning and Sprint Study results

3.Roles of the ASCR/MSK Team

- Training program design, fitness assessments, hardware training, injury prevention, and SME functions

4.Postflight Reconditioning Strategies

- Dual lens: Physical medicine and strength & conditioning perspectives
- Phase-based return to function after long-duration missions

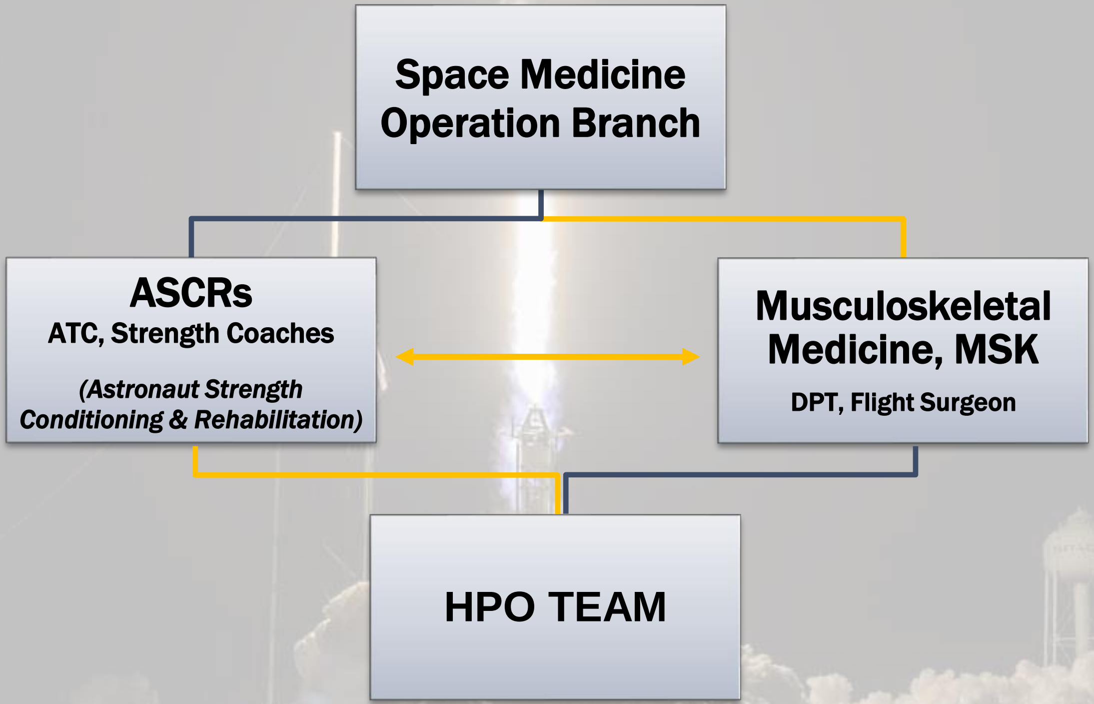
5.Key Takeaways

- Lessons learned for astronaut health, performance preservation, and reconditioning

6.Closing Remarks and Q&A

- Summary of main points and action items

Human Performance Organization Chart



Space Medicine Operation Branch

ASCRs
ATC, Strength Coaches
(Astronaut Strength Conditioning & Rehabilitation)

Musculoskeletal Medicine, MSK
DPT, Flight Surgeon

HPO TEAM

ASCR / MSK TEAM

Bruce Nieschwitz
- Certified Athletic Trainer (ATC)
- Texas Licensed Athletic Trainer (LAT)
- USA Weightlifting, Sports Performance Coach (USAW)
- Certified Mobility Specialist FRc

Christi Keeler
- Certified Athletic Trainer (ATC)
- Texas Licensed Athletic Trainer (LAT)
- Certified Mobility Specialist FRc
- Graston M-1 Technique Trained
- Dry Needling Certified

Danielle Anderson, Lt Col, USAF
- Doctor of Physical Therapy/Doctor of Science in PT (DPT/DSC)
- Orthopedic Certified Specialist (OCS)
- Fellow of the American Academy of Orthopedic Manual PT (FAAOMPT)
- Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist (CSCS)
- Certified Dry Needling Instructor

Stephanie Petery
- Certified Athletic Trainer (ATC)
- Texas Licensed Athletic Trainer (LAT)
- Certified Mobility Specialist FRc
- Graston M-1 Technique Trained
- Mental Health First Aid Certified (MHFA)

Corey Twine
- Strength and Conditioning Coach Certified- CSCCa
- Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist (CSCS)
- Certified Mobility Specialist FRc

Improving Health and Building Readiness. Anytime, Anywhere — Always

Mission & Vison

Mission

- Optimize the performance, durability, and sustainability of the Astronaut corps by utilizing an interdisciplinary approach towards enhancing physical readiness and recovery as Astronauts train for, live in, and return from space.

Vision

- Ensure every astronaut is fully prepared to meet the demands of spaceflight and beyond—supporting mission success and long-term health through cutting-edge, data-driven strategies.

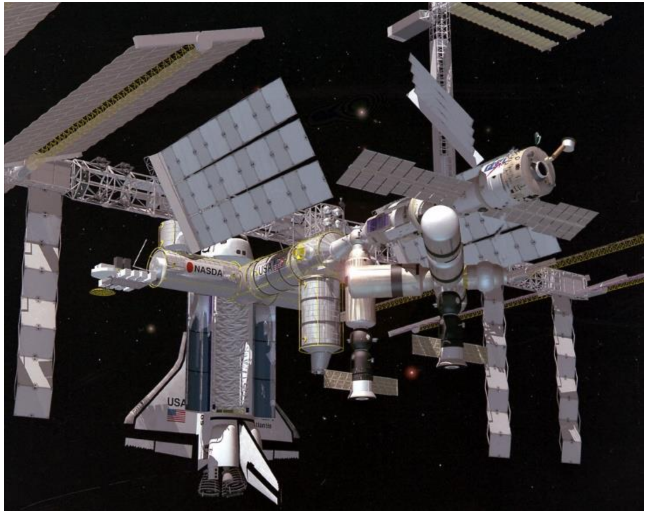
Core Values

- Evidence-based practice
- Interdisciplinary collaboration
- Precision in training and recovery
- Sustainable human performance
- Accountability and continuous improvement

ASCR
ASTRONAUT STRENGTH CONDITIONING & REHABILITATION

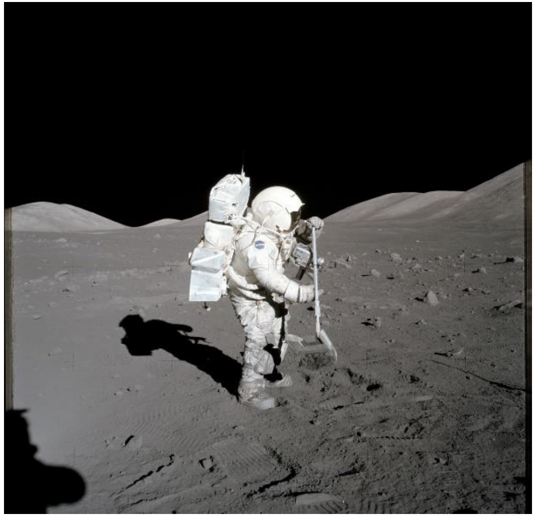
Spaceflight: The Ultimate Extreme Environment

International Space Station (ISS)



NASA ID: 9414430

Future Lunar Extravehicular (EVA)



NASA ID:as17-134-20425

Artemis and Beyond- Exploration

NASA ID: 9414430

[NASA Image and Video Library]

International Space Station Exercise Hardware Timeline

2000 TVIS – Treadmill with Vibration Isolation and Stabilization

2001 CEVIS – Cycle Ergometer with Vibration Isolation and Stabilization

2001-2008, 2011 iRED – Interim Resistive Exercise Device

2008 (Nov) ARED- Advanced Resistive Exercise Device (Delivered)

2009-2010 ARED – Operational Adoption Calibration and Validation Period

2009 Aug T2 / COLBERT – Combined Operational Load-Bearing External Resistance

2013 TVIS Retired

2023 Teal CEVIS Replacement for CEVIS

2025 ARED, T2, and Teal CEVIS Inventory

Multisystem Deconditioning

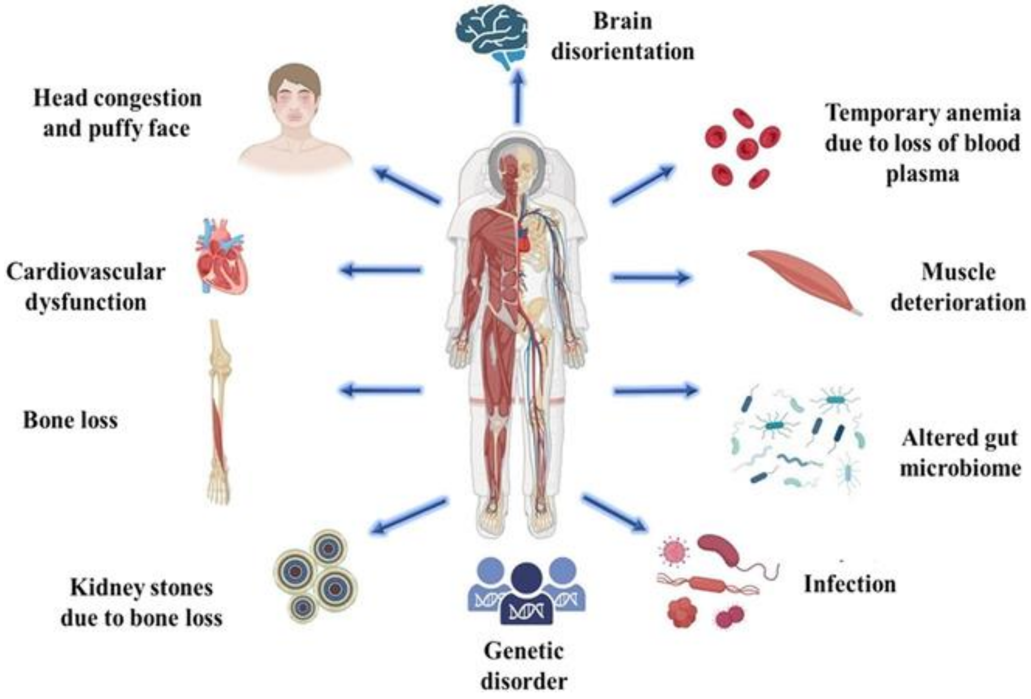


Fig. 1. Physiological changes in spaceflight environment

Wani A, et al. 2024

Three-Domain Framework For Deconditioning

Rationale

- *Deconditioning* from long-duration spaceflight is multifaceted, involving interrelated changes in **physiology**, **anatomy**, and **performance.**
- Using these domains ensures a comprehensive description of adaptation loss and its operational consequences.

Framework Basis

- **Physiological** – Captures changes in functional capacity of systems (e.g., plasma volume loss, altered cardiovascular control).
- **Anatomical** – Reflects structural adaptations or degradation (e.g., cardiac atrophy, vascular remodeling).
- **Performance** – Links physiological and anatomical changes to mission-relevant outcomes (e.g., orthostatic intolerance, reduced VO_2 peak).

Integration with Literature

- *Cardiovascular deconditioning*: Functional and structural changes in the heart and blood vessels due to spaceflight or reduced gravity *(Stenger et al., 2019)*.
- *Detraining*: Loss of physiological, anatomical, and performance adaptations when training is reduced or stopped *(Mujika, 2017)*.
- Microgravity is an extreme form of involuntary detraining, driving measurable changes in each domain.

Cardiovascular Deconditioning

[Human – Long Duration Spaceflight]

Physiological

- Plasma volume loss – Long-duration spaceflight induces a rapid decline in plasma volume, contributing to reduced stroke volume and cardiac output postflight.
  (*Lee et al., 2019*)

Anatomical

- Cardiac atrophy – Left ventricular mass decreases after prolonged exposure to microgravity despite exercise countermeasures.
  (*Shibata et al., 2023 – Cardiac Effects of Long-Duration Space Flight, JACC, p. 679–681*)

Performance

- Orthostatic intolerance – Impaired ability to maintain upright posture upon re-exposure to gravity; VO_2 peak is significantly reduced after return.
  (*Lee et al., 2019 – Impact of Prolonged Spaceflight on Orthostatic Tolerance, Circulation*)

Muscular Deconditioning

[Human – Long Duration Spaceflight]

Physiological

- **Fiber-type shift** – Long-duration spaceflight causes a shift from slow-twitch (Type I) to fast-twitch (Type IIa/x) fibers in the soleus and gastrocnemius, along with reduced oxidative enzyme activity and slower postflight recovery of mitochondrial capacity.
  (*Fitts et al., 2010 – The Journal of Physiology, p. 3575–3578*)

Anatomical

- **Atrophy** – Soleus muscle fiber cross-sectional area declined by ~35–45% in Type I fibers and ~20–30% in Type II fibers following ~180 days in space. Gastrocnemius atrophy was also observed, though less severe.
  (*Fitts et al., 2001 – Journal of Experimental Biology, p. 3205–3207; Fitts et al., 2010 – p. 3573*)

Performance

- **Strength loss** – Astronauts experienced a 20–48% reduction in maximal voluntary contraction force in the plantar flexors post-flight, impairing functional locomotion and posture control.
  (*Trappe et al., 2009 – Journal of Applied Physiology, p. 1162–1163*; *Fitts et al., 2010 – p. 3579–3581*)

Bone Deconditioning

[Human – Long Duration Spaceflight]

Physiological

- **Calcium mobilization** – Long-duration spaceflight accelerates bone resorption while suppressing formation early in the mission. Bone resorption markers increased by ~113% within the first 11 ± 2 days of flight, while bone formation markers remained unchanged for the first 30 days and rose at only ~7% per month thereafter. (*Pouille et al., 2020 – npj Microgravity, p. 4–5*)

Anatomical

- **Site-specific loss** – In astronauts flying 4–6-month ISS missions, trabecular bone mineral density (vBMD) at the hip decreased by 2.2–2.7% per month, while cortical vBMD declined more slowly at 0.4–0.5% per month, primarily due to endocortical thinning. Spine losses were less severe, averaging ~0.9% per month. (*Lang et al., 2004 – Journal of Bone and Mineral Research, p. 1008–1010*)

Performance

- **Fracture risk** – Weight-bearing skeletal sites such as the pelvis and lower limbs experienced losses of ~0.8% per month, leading to cumulative deficits of 4–6% after 6 months. These reductions in structural integrity elevate the risk of fracture upon reloading in gravity environments. (*Pouille et al., 2020 – npj Microgravity, p. 6–7*)

Tendon and Ligaments Deconditioning

[Human & Animal Model – Ground-Based]

What Tendons & Ligaments Respond To

- These connective tissues adapt to **tensile loading**—pulling forces created by muscle contractions
- In response to repeated load:
  - ↑ **Collagen synthesis** within days (Kjær, 2009, p. 503)
  - ↑ **Cross-sectional area (CSA)** and tendon hypertrophy (Heinemeier & Kjaer, 2011, p. 116)
  - ↑ **Stiffness**, improving force transmission and joint protection
- Tendon adaptation is **strain- and region-specific** (Heinemeier & Kjaer, 2011, p. 118)

What Happens in Unloading

- Without mechanical loading (e.g., bed rest or spaceflight analogs):
  - ↓ **Collagen turnover** and synthesis (Kjær, 2009, p. 504)
  - ↓ **Tendon stiffness and CSA** over time
  - Delayed or incomplete recovery post-unloading (Heinemeier & Kjaer, 2011, p. 119)
- *These effects have been documented in both humans (via unloading analogs) and animal models—but* ***no validated human spaceflight tendon data*** *yet exists.*

Skeletal Structures and Functions | Anatomy and Physiology I | Study Guides

Key Point

- **Tendons and ligaments depend on regular, high-tension loading to maintain structure and function**
  ➞ Countermeasures must include **progressive, forceful mechanical load** to protect against performance loss and injury risk

Cartilage Deconditioning

[Animal Model – Spaceflight & Ground-Based]

Cartilage Requires Mechanical Loading

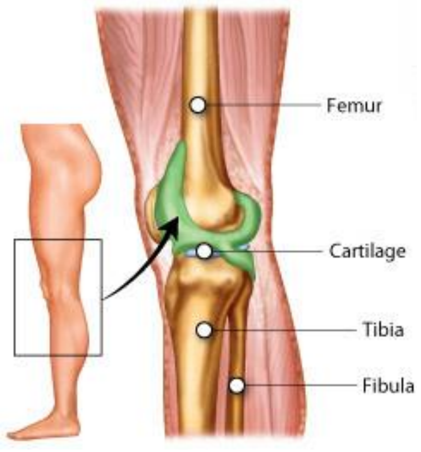
- Articular cartilage is avascular and relies on **cyclic mechanical loading** to maintain nutrient flow and matrix integrity
- **Hindlimb unloading (HLU) studies** and **simulated microgravity** consistently show:
  - Loss of proteoglycans and reduced matrix synthesis
  - Reduced stiffness and cartilage degeneration
  - Active exercise *prevents* degradation in HLU models
- Engineered cartilage constructs in microgravity also showed **less proteoglycan synthesis and reduced dynamic stiffness**

Unloading Consequences (Not Human Data)

- In rodent Hindlimb Unloading (HLU) and microgravity analogs:
  - ↓ Proteoglycan content
  - Early signs of matrix breakdown
  - **Radiation** exposure worsens cartilage loss
- No current data on cartilage biomarkers in astronauts, but authors recommend **fluid sampling + imaging expansion**

Key Point

- **Cartilage depends on mechanical load to stay healthy**
  ➞ Without 1G loading, tissue rapidly deteriorates in analog and animal studies
  ➞ Countermeasures must recreate **intermittent, joint-specific loading patterns**



[Skeletal Structures and Functions | Anatomy and Physiology I | Study Guides]

Fitzgerald, J. (2017)

Spinal Loading Is Essential—But Spaceflight Alters the System

[Human – Long Duration Spaceflight] | [Human Analog – Bed Rest]

Why Spinal Loading in Spaceflight Is Complex (But Necessary!)

The Intervertebral Disc Needs Load

- Intervertebral discs (IVDs) rely on **cyclic axial compression** to maintain structure and function
- In **microgravity**, this mechanical loading is removed, contributing to changes in **spinal alignment and tissue stress**
- **Bailey et al. (2018)** found postflight spinal changes consistent with **reduced lumbar curvature** and **altered disc morphology**, but **MRI did not confirm increased hydration**
- *These changes likely reflect **postural adaptation and muscle atrophy**, not disc swelling
  → *Hydration appears preserved postflight despite elongation*

Consequences of Unloading

- **Reduced lumbar lordosis** and spinal flattening (Bailey et al., 2018)
- **Multifidus and spinal extensor atrophy** observed in both flight and bed rest analogs
- **Prolonged disc morphology changes** have been documented >5 months post-bed rest (Belavý et al., 2011)
- These adaptations may **increase susceptibility to disc herniation or back pain** during reloading
- **Space Adaptation Back Pain (SABP)**
    - Reported in **52% of astronauts** during early spaceflight (Kerstman et al., 2012)
    - Usually **mild and self-limited**, but 14% report **moderate to severe pain**
    - Most common location: **lower back**
    - Most effective interventions:
        - **Fetal positioning (91%)**
        - **Exercise and analgesics (85%)**

Spinal Loading Is Essential—But Spaceflight Alters the System

[Human – Long Duration Spaceflight]

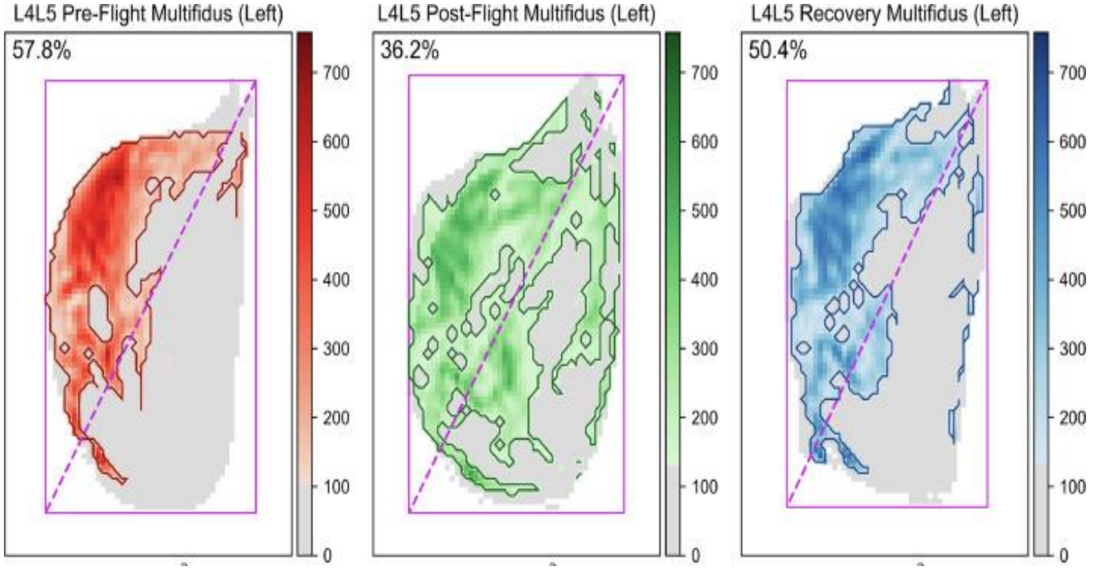


Fig. 2. Example of longitudinal changes in multifidus %m (lean muscle in grey and fat infiltration in red, green, and blue depending on timepoint) representative of study findings that m% significantly decreases in lower lumbar levels following spaceflight (L4L5: -6.2%, p=.009; L5S1: -7.0%, p=.006), then recovers to values not significantly different from preflight levels.

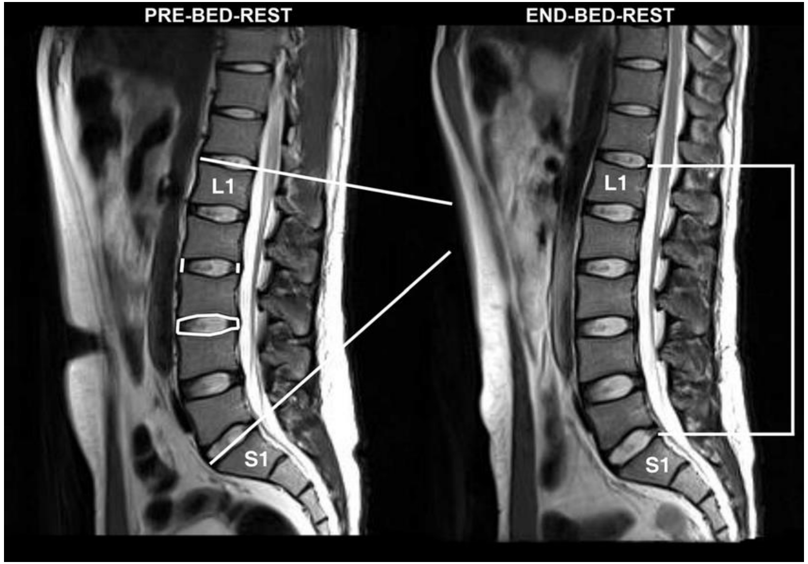
Bailey et al. 2022 *Biomechanical Changes in the lumbar spine following spaceflight and factors associated with post spaceflight disc herniation”*

Spinal Loading Is Essential—But Spaceflight Alters the System

[Human – Long Duration Spaceflight] | [Human Analog – Bed Rest]

Key Point

- While disc hydration may be preserved, spinal muscle atrophy, alignment shifts, and altered biomechanics increase the risk for pain and injury post-flight
  → Targeted loading strategies are necessary to preserve segmental stability and reduce reconditioning risk.



“Note the lengthening of the spine at the end of bed rest, increase in disk size, and flattening of the spinal curvature.” Belavy, et al, 2010

Sensorimotor and Spaceflight

[Human – Long Duration Spaceflight]

Physiological

- Neurovestibular adaptation – Long-duration spaceflight alters vestibular function and sensorimotor integration, requiring central nervous system reweighting of sensory inputs.
  Mulavara et al., 2010 – *Individual Predictors of Sensorimotor Adaptability*, J Clin Pharmacol, p. 138S–140S)

Anatomical

- Structural brain changes – Spaceflight is associated with neuroplastic changes in brain regions involved in motor control and sensory integration, including shifts in gray matter volume distribution.
  Seidler et al., 2015 – *Individual Predictors of Sensorimotor Adaptability*, Front Syst Neurosci, p. 1–3)

Performance

- Locomotor and postural instability – Postflight performance is degraded in gait, dynamic balance, and coordinated movement tasks, increasing fall and injury risk during early re-adaptation to gravity.
  Mulavara et al., 2010 – *Individual Predictors of Sensorimotor Adaptability*, J Clin Pharmacol, p. 138S–142S)

Macaulay, et al, Front Syst Neurosci, 2021

The Language of Tissues is Load

✅ **Tissue Adaptation to Loading: Evidence-Based Summary**

Tissue Type	Required Load Stimulus	Supporting Research (Model Type)
Bone	High-impact, axial loading (e.g., 1–2× BW, jumping/landing, resisted locomotion)	**[Human – Long Duration Spaceflight]** Lang et al. (2004) – Hip and spine BMD loss with unloading (QCT, DXA) **[Human Analog – Bed Rest]** LeBlanc et al. (2007); Sibonga et al. (2019) – ARED provides partial protection against bone loss
Cartilage	Cyclic compression and shear (e.g., ambulation, weight-bearing joint use)	**[Animal Model – Spaceflight & Ground-Based]** Neufer et al. (2022); Bailey et al. (2018) – Cartilage thinning and proteoglycan loss under unloading in rodent models
Tendon & Ligament	Progressive tensile load (e.g., strength training, plyometrics, eccentric loading)	**[Animal Model – Ground-Based]** Kjær et al. (2009); Heinemeier & Kjaer (2011) – Rodent studies show ↑ collagen turnover and CSA with tensile loading
Muscle	Mechanical tension & metabolic stress (e.g., 70–85% 1RM, hypertrophy training, BFR)	**[Human – Long Duration Spaceflight]** Fitts et al. (2010); Trappe et al. (2009) – Muscle atrophy with unloading, preserved with high-load resistance training **[Human – Long Duration Spaceflight]** Sibonga et al. (2019) – ARED effectiveness
Nervous System	Neuromuscular control under fatigue (e.g., dynamic balance, perturbation, load tracking)	**[Human Analog – Ground-Based]** Mulavara et al. (2010); Ruffieux et al. (2017) – Sensorimotor adaptability influenced by individual factors and training in analog environments

Roles of the ASCR/MSK Group (General)

NASA ID: as17-152-23392

Subject Matter Expert (SME) – Spaceflight Human Performance & Optimization

Responsibilities

- **Design, Direct, and Supervise**
    - Evidence-based physical training programs for all active astronauts
    - Annual Fitness Assessments
    - Group exercise programming and implementation

Clinical Services

- **Provide Musculoskeletal (MSK) Support**
    - Injury prevention, assessment, and rehabilitation
    - Collaboration with the MSK multidisciplinary team to ensure continuity of care

Technical Expertise

- **Contribute to Hardware Development**
    - In-flight exercise hardware: requirements generation, design input, and operational integration

Roles of the ASCR/MSK Group (Pre-Flight / In-Flight)

Comprehensive Training Plan

- Align with mission objectives & crew goals
- Modalities: Strength, Endurance, Metabolic Conditioning, Flexibility/Mobility, Mission-Specific Tasks (e.g., EVA prep)

Fitness Assessments

- Conduct Flight Fitness Assessments (annual, pre-/post-flight)
- Monitor and track performance trends

Exercise Hardware Training

- Instruct crewmembers on CMS hardware operation & safety
- Develop and Deliver 2.5 hr./day, 6 days/week: 1.5 hr. Resistive + 1 hr Metabolic
- PT/V and PEC sessions integrated into training

MSK Injury Prevention & Collaboration

- Identify and address MSK issues impacting readiness
- Prescribe **targeted** prevention & rehab protocols
- Coordinate with Flight Surgeons & MSK team to align training and medical goals

Technical SME Role

- Serve as subject matter experts on CMS hardware functionality & operational issues

Lee et al., 2019

Exercise on ARED: Preserving Bone and Muscular Strength

- **Purpose of ARED:**
  - To simulate free-weight resistance training in microgravity using vacuum cylinders and flywheel mechanisms.
  - Enables astronauts to perform high-load, multi-joint exercises critical for maintaining musculoskeletal health.
- **Why It Matters:**
  - Microgravity causes muscle atrophy and bone loss, especially in the lower body and spine.
  - ARED provides the mechanical loading necessary to preserve strength, power, and functional movement capacity.
- **Key Features:**
  - Accommodates compound lifts (e.g., squats, deadlifts, bench press).
  - Adjustable resistance: up to ~600 lbs. equivalent.
  - Integrated sensors to monitor bar speed and loading consistency (when enabled).

Astronaut Lindgren exercises in Node 3 module

NASA ID: iss044e024392

Resistance Training (ARED) – NASA Sprint Study

High Intensity / Lower Volume (Sprint Protocol)

- Frequency: **3 days/week**
- Model: **Undulating periodized** over a 24-week mesocycle
- Initial 2-week acclimatization, then:
  - **High volume:** 4 × 12 reps
  - **Moderate volume:** 4 × 8 reps
  - **Low volume:** 4 × 6 reps
- Fourth set performed **to muscle failure** at near-maximal load
- Rotation among three routines throughout the mission
- Typical sequence:
  - Squat variations (back, single leg, sumo)
  - Heel raise variations (bilateral, single leg)
  - Deadlift variations (conventional, Romanian, sumo)
  - Upper body lifts on the same schedule as the control group
- Time: ~3 hours/week for resistance work
- Average loads for squat, heel raise, and deadlift were **6–15% higher** than control despite **41–46% fewer reps/week**

Astronaut Lindgren exercises in Node 3 module

NASA ID: iss044e024392

English et al., 2020

Exercise on CEVIS: Cardiovascular Conditioning in Microgravity

- **Purpose of CEVIS:**
  - Designed to provide aerobic exercise in microgravity through stationary cycling.
  - Helps maintain cardiovascular health, endurance capacity, and metabolic function during long-duration spaceflight
- **Why It Matters:**
  - In microgravity, the heart and vascular system decondition rapidly without sustained aerobic stimulus.
  - CEVIS supports cardiac output, oxygen uptake (VO_2), and blood volume maintenance.
- **Key Features:**
  - Adjustable resistance and cadence to prescribe training at various intensities up to 600 watts.
  - Used with or without harness support depending on exercise goals.
  - Integrated into daily crew countermeasure protocols.
  - Vibration Isolation System prevents unwanted motion transfer to the ISS structure.

Astronaut Nick Hague exercices on CEVIS

NASA ID: iss072e031339

Exercise on T2: Load-Bearing Aerobic Training in Microgravity

- **Purpose of T2 Treadmill:**
    - Provides aerobic exercise while delivering axial loading through a harness and bungee system.
    - Mimics the mechanical forces of walking and running on Earth to preserve cardiovascular and musculoskeletal health, maybe.
- **Why It Matters:**
    - Microgravity eliminates natural ground reaction forces—T2 reintroduces these forces to help maintain:
        - Bone density
        - Muscle mass (especially lower body)
        - Cardiopulmonary function
- **Key Features:**
    - Harness and bungee loading system provides up to 70–80% bodyweight simulation.
    - **Adjustable speed** up to 12 mph with programmable intensity settings
    - Data tracking for distance, pace, heart rate, and mechanical load.
    - Mounted on a vibration isolation system to prevent disturbances to the ISS structure.

Astronaut Moghbeli exercises on the T2

NASA ID: iss070e100775

Cardiovascular Training (CEVIS & T2) - NASA Sprint Study

High Intensity / Lower Volume (Sprint Protocol)

- Frequency: **6 days/week** (alternating intervals and continuous sessions)
- Interval Workouts (each completed 1×/week):
    - **8 × 30 s** ~100% VO_2peak, >90% HRmax (CEVIS or T2)
    - **6 × 2 min** ~95–100% VO_2peak, >90% HRmax
    - **4 × 4 min** ~90–95% VO_2peak, >90% HRmax
- **Continuous Aerobic: 30 min @ ~75% VO_2peak**
- Intensity monitored by HR; adjusted in-flight based on VO_2peak testing and crew feedback
- CEVIS: 25–350 W range, pedal speed 30–120 RPM, strapped in for stability
- T2 treadmill: Running speeds 2.4–19.3 km/h, harness loading began at ~60% bodyweight, progressed to ~75–80% as tolerated
- Aerobic exercise volume for Sprint was **17% lower** than that of the control, with similar intensity for matched workouts

NASA ID: iss018e042649

English et al., 2020

Sprint vs. Standard Care Protocols (ARED / CEVIS / T2)

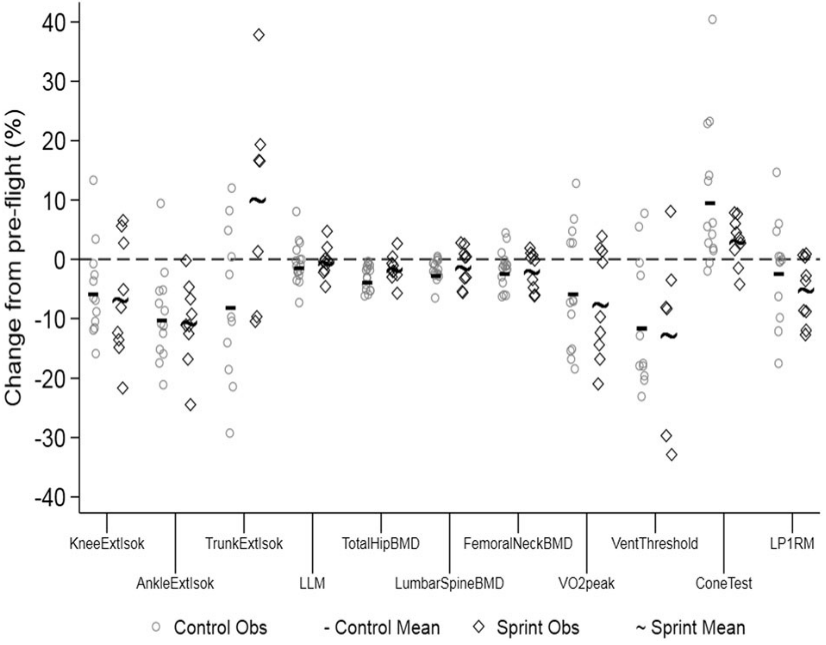
Feature	Sprint (High Intensity / Lower Volume)	Standard Care (Lower Intensity / Higher Volume)
Resistance Training (ARED)	3 d/week; Undulating periodized model (4×6, 4×8, 4×12); 4th set to failure; Higher average loads (↑6–15%); 41–46% fewer reps/week; ~3 h/week total	6 d/week; 9-day linear periodization across 2 mesocycles; Progressive loading 70–120% RM; Squat, heel raise, deadlift variations daily; Heel raises 4×20 reps; ~6–7 h/week total
Cardiovascular (CEVIS/T2)	6 d/week alternating: 3 × interval sessions (8×30s; 6×2min; 4×4min @ >90% HRmax) and 3 × continuous sessions (30 min @ ~75% VO_2peak); Harness load ~60%→75–80% BW; ~3 h/week total	6 d/week; Combination of continuous and interval; CEVIS @ 70–100% VO_2peak; T2 @ 70–100% HRmax; Harness load ~60%→75–80% BW; ~3–4 h/week total
Weekly Time	~6 h/week total exercise	~9–10 h/week total exercise
Key Advantage	Equal or better physiological outcomes in less time; Higher intensity, lower volume	Established protocol, higher total training volume

English et al., 2020

Cardiovascular Training (CEVIS & T2) - NASA Sprint Study

Key Findings from This Figure

- **Strength preservation**
  - The sprint group generally had smaller losses in isokinetic knee, ankle, and trunk extension strength compared to the Control.
  - Leg Press 1RM: Control showed significant decreases; Sprint group losses were much smaller.
- **Aerobic fitness**
  - VO_2peak and Ventilatory Threshold declines were less severe in the Sprint group — indicating better preservation of cardiovascular capacity.
- **Lean mass**
  - Lean leg mass (LLM) declined in both groups, but the Sprint group losses were smaller.
- **Bone health**
  - BMD losses at hip, femoral neck, and lumbar spine occurred in both groups with no meaningful difference between them — indicating Sprint training did not mitigate spaceflight bone loss.
- **Functional agility (Cone Test)**
  - Both groups showed variability, but the Sprint group was closer to baseline performance.



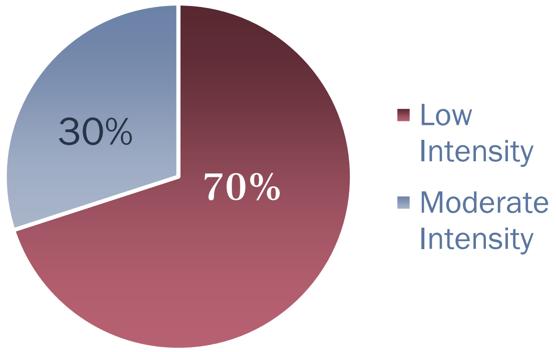
English et al., 2020

Cardiovascular Training (CEVIS & T2) – Bottomline

Frontiers in Physiology Review (crew HR ≥ 70% HR_{max})

- This review summarized in-flight ISS data, showing that astronauts who maintained **exercise intensity ≥ 70% of max HR** had the **smallest VO_2 reductions postflight**:
    - Maximal oxygen uptake (VO_2) dropped by only **~9%** in those training ≥ 70% HR_{max}
    - In comparison, those exercising below 70% HR_{max} saw losses of **15–23%**
- This provides strong evidence that **intensity matters**—working at or above 70% of max HR in-flight significantly preserves cardiovascular fitness.
- Where do we get HR_{max}?

% of Time in HR Zone



Scott et al. 2023

Post-Flight Reconditioning – Long Duration Spaceflight

Framing the Problem – Dual Lens Perspective

Neuromuscular & Vestibular Challenges

- Disrupted sensorimotor integration, altered proprioception, gaze instability, reduced motor control
- Balance impairments, high fall risk in early R+ phase
- **(PM)**: Prioritize vestibular rehab, proprioceptive retraining
- **(S&C)**: Reinforce posture, stability, re-learn basic locomotor patterns

Cited: Macaulay et al., 2021 – Front Syst Neurosci

Musculoskeletal Injuries

- ~92% of postflight injuries occur in the initial 12 months **after landing**
- Lumbar disc herniation (50% in one study), low multifidus %, and asymmetry linked to injury risk
- **(PM)**: Manual therapy, mobility restoration, avoid early axial load
- **(S&C)**: Controlled reloading → strength → agility → skilled movement

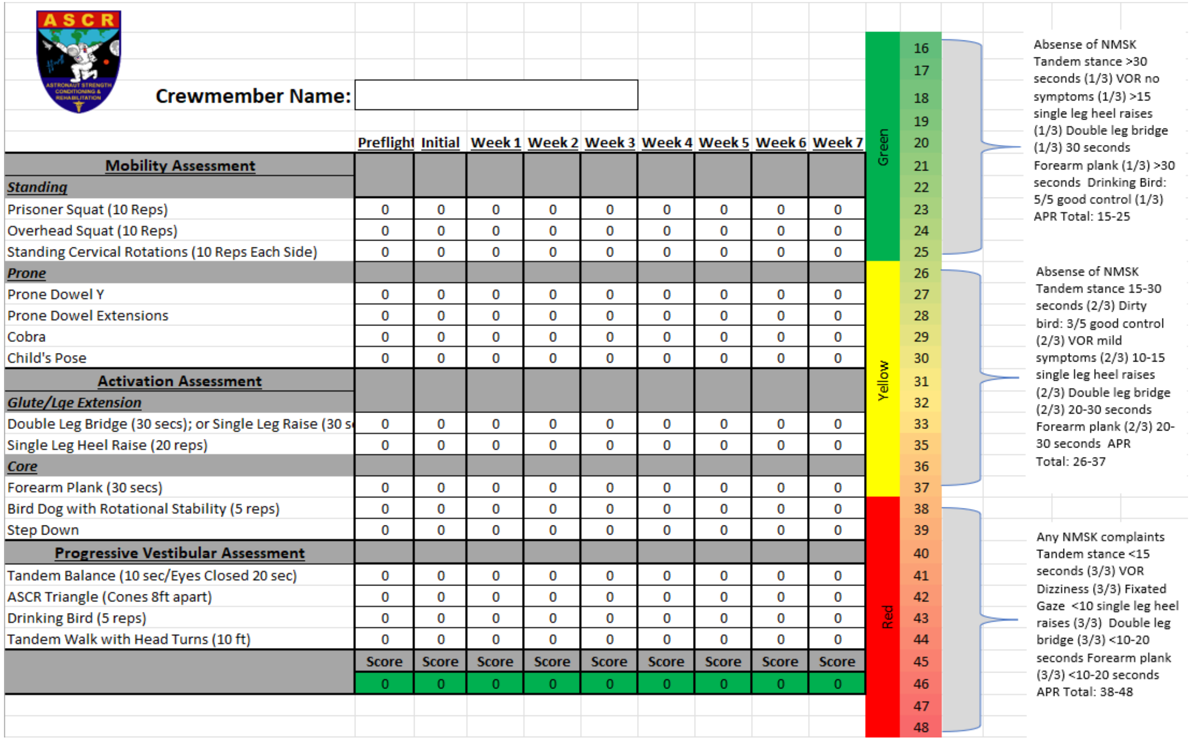
Cited: Bailey et al., 2022 – Spine Journal

Orthostatic Intolerance

- ↓ Plasma volume, impaired baroreflex, venous pooling
- Avoid rapid posture changes early in rehab
- **(PM)**: Compression garments, upright tolerance training
- **(S&C):** Progress to upright aerobic work (upright cyclic, running, walking, emphasize calf pump and normal gait.

NASA ID: NHQ201910030033

Assessments – Needs Based Practice



Crewmember Name:

	Preflight	Initial	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7
Mobility Assessment									
Standing									
Prisoner Squat (10 Reps)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Overhead Squat (10 Reps)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Standing Cervical Rotations (10 Reps Each Side)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Prone									
Prone Dowel Y	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Prone Dowel Extensions	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cobra	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Child's Pose	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Activation Assessment									
Glute/Lge Extension									
Double Leg Bridge (30 secs); or Single Leg Raise (30 s	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Single Leg Heel Raise (20 reps)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Core									
Forearm Plank (30 secs)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bird Dog with Rotational Stability (5 reps)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Step Down	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Progressive Vestibular Assessment									
Tandem Balance (10 sec/Eyes Closed 20 sec)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
ASCR Triangle (Cones 8ft apart)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Drinking Bird (5 reps)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tandem Walk with Head Turns (10 ft)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Score	Score	Score	Score	Score	Score	Score	Score	Score
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Green	16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25	Absense of NMSK Tandem stance >30 seconds (1/3) VOR no symptoms (1/3) >15 single leg heel raises (1/3) Double leg bridge (1/3) 30 seconds Forearm plank (1/3) >30 seconds Drinking Bird: 5/5 good control (1/3) APR Total: 15-25
Yellow	26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 35 36 37	Absense of NMSK Tandem stance 15-30 seconds (2/3) Dirty bird: 3/5 good control (2/3) VOR mild symptoms (2/3) 10-15 single leg heel raises (2/3) Double leg bridge (2/3) 20-30 seconds Forearm plank (2/3) 20-30 seconds APR Total: 26-37
Red	38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48	Any NMSK complaints Tandem stance <15 seconds (3/3) VOR Dizziness (3/3) Fixated Gaze <10 single leg heel raises (3/3) Double leg bridge (3/3) <10-20 seconds Forearm plank (3/3) <10-20 seconds APR Total: 38-48

Name: MAP-R Assessment

Acronym Meaning:

- Mobility
- Activation
- Postural Control – (Includes vestibular function)
- Readiness

Post Flight Reconditioning – Long Duration Spaceflight

45-Day Framework | ~2 hrs/day | Individualized Based on System Recovery

Progressive Loading Strategy

- Must respect multisystem deconditioning: CNS, MSK, cardiovascular
- Phase-Based Return:
    - Phase 1: RESET - Restore proprioception, joint integrity, gaze control
    - Phase 2: REBUILD - Begin unstable surfaces, reintroduce load
    - Phase 3: REFINE - Power, agility, complex task integration

Dual Goals

- **PM/Rehab**: Mitigate pain, restore movement competency, re-establish neuromuscular firing
- **S&C**: Rebuild strength, work capacity, and functional readiness for everyday task demands

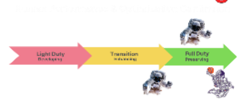
Monitor & Adapt

- Fatigue, dizziness, joint pain = red flags
- Functional tests: heel raises, tandem stance, bridge, plank
- Use **subjective markers** of recovery + movement quality

1

2

3



Post Flight Reconditioning – Long Duration Spaceflight

Key Takeaways for Coaches and Clinicians

- Injuries peak during **early reconditioning**; functional movement must precede fitness
- Prior injury history and spine health are predictive of post-flight issues
- Early **load intolerance** requires modified strength programming

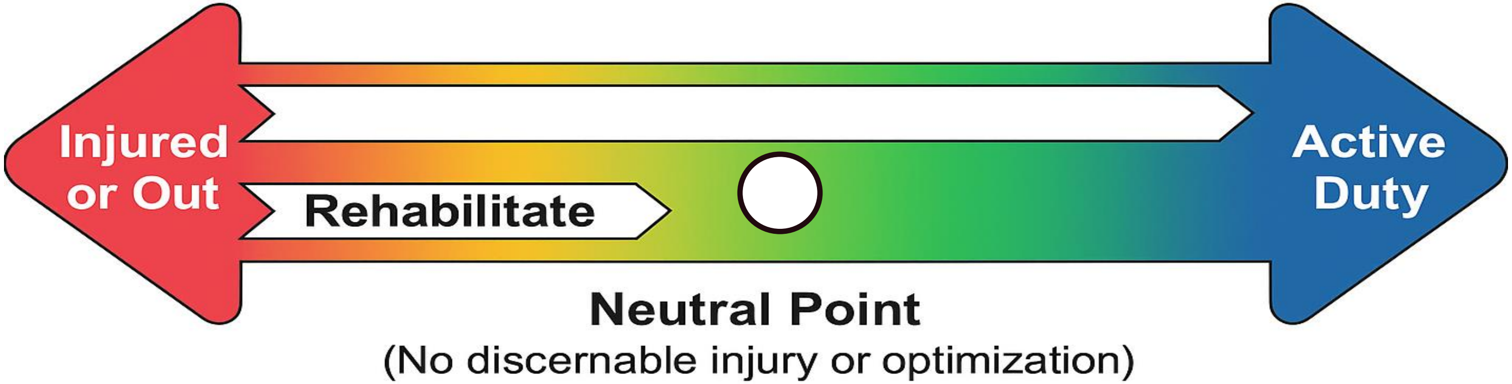
Daily Management

- Monitor total training volume and activity outside rehab hours
- Balance desire to return to preflight fitness with medical evidence and tissue readiness
- Use mixed-method delivery (in-person, web-based coaching, travel flexibility)

Integration of Systems

- Performance gains only emerge when rehab and S&C are tightly aligned
- Both disciplines must co-lead: shared decisions, shared outcomes
- 🔗 *“Reconditioning isn’t about restarting training—it’s about re-educating the entire neuromuscular system in a new gravity context.”*
  Cited: Bailey et al., 2022

Human Performance Continuum



Injured or Out

Rehabilitate

Active Duty

Neutral Point

(No discernable injury or optimization)

Key Points:

- *Image <u>adopted</u> from the Illness–Wellness Continuum developed by Dr. John W. Travis in 1972.
- Demonstrates the full spectrum of human performance from *injured/out* to *active duty*.
- Emphasizes rehabilitation and optimization as proactive processes, not just the absence of injury.
- Encourages viewing performance as a dynamic continuum, where targeted actions can move individuals toward high-functioning readiness.
- Supports an integrated approach—physical, mental, and operational capabilities are all interconnected in achieving peak performance.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

1. **Understand** the multisystem nature of astronaut deconditioning and its operational consequences.
2. **Identify** the primary exercise countermeasures used aboard the International Space Station.
3. **Explain** the role of interdisciplinary collaboration in preserving astronaut health and performance.
4. **Appreciate** the importance of targeted reconditioning strategies upon return to Earth.
5. **Evaluate** how lessons learned from spaceflight can inform human performance optimization in other extreme environments.

Key Takeaways

Spaceflight is the ultimate extreme environment — it drives multisystem deconditioning that impacts cardiovascular, musculoskeletal, and sensorimotor performance.

- **Deconditioning is multifaceted** — physiological, anatomical, and performance changes are interlinked and require targeted countermeasures.
- **Evidence-based exercise countermeasures** like ARED, CEVIS, and T2 remain essential to preserving astronaut strength, endurance, and functional readiness.
- **The NASA Sprint Study** demonstrates that high-intensity, lower-volume training can maintain performance while reducing training time.
- **Postflight reconditioning must be phase-based** — progressing from neuromuscular stability to strength and functional performance while respecting tissue recovery.
- **Collaboration is critical** — integrating strength & conditioning, physical medicine, and operational needs ensures mission success and long-term astronaut health.

Roundtable / Questions?

THANK YOU


ASCR
ASTRONAUT STRENGTH CONDITIONING & REHABILITATION


SPACE MEDICINE OPERATIONS DIVISION
NASA
JSC

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Exercise Countermeasures Hardware Timeline

Year	Device / Acronym	Event & Description	Source Link
2000	TVIS – Treadmill with Vibration Isolation and Stabilization	First treadmill for aerobic exercise on ISS; vibration isolation prevented disturbance to spacecraft structure.	https://ntrs.nasa.gov/api/citations/20160012791/downloads/20160012791.pdf
2001	CEVIS – Cycle Ergometer with Vibration Isolation and Stabilization	First ISS stationary bike for aerobic capacity training; vibration-isolated frame.	https://www.nasa.gov/missions/station/iss-research/astronaut-exercise/
2001–2008	iRED – Interim Resistive Exercise Device	Provided resistive training (squat, deadlift, bench press, heel raise, etc.) until ARED arrival.	https://www.nasa.gov/missions/station/iss-research/astronaut-exercise/
Nov 2008	ARED – Advanced Resistive Exercise Device (delivered)	Arrived via STS-126; piston/flywheel design allows Earth-like resistance up to ~600 lbs.	https://www.nasa.gov/missions/station/iss-research/astronaut-exercise/
2009–2010	ARED – Operational adoption	Became the primary resistive training device after crew calibration and validation period.	https://www.nasa.gov/missions/station/iss-research/astronaut-exercise/
Aug 2009	T2 / COLBERT – Combined Operational Load-Bearing External Resistance Treadmill	Delivered via STS-128; second treadmill on ISS; located in U.S. Node 3 (Tranquility).	https://www.nasa.gov/content/t2-treadmill
Mar 2010	MARES – Muscle Atrophy Research and Exercise System	Installed in ESA’s Columbus Lab; allows detailed biomechanical study of muscle function in microgravity.	https://www.esa.int/Science_Exploration/Human_and_Robotic_Exploration/Columbus/MARES
Jun 2013	TVIS retired	After 12+ years of service, TVIS was removed and discarded.	https://www.space.com/21516-space-station-treadmill-trash.html
2023	FERGO – Replacement for CEVIS	Modernized cycling ergometer replaces CEVIS for continued aerobic training capability.	https://www.nasa.gov/missions/station/iss-research/astronaut-exercise/
2025	ARED, T2, FERGO, MARES – Active inventory	Current integrated exercise system supports cardiovascular, strength, and research needs for all crew.	https://www.nasa.gov/missions/station/iss-research/astronaut-exercise/