Do workouts, colds really mix? It's your call

Q: Is it OK to workout when you are sick? Like, have a common cold, sick? Some say “sweat it out” and it will make you recover quicker — others say “take a break” and let your body recover.

Answer: This is a question I struggle with any time I am sick, so I was interested in finding an answer because of my own curiosity.

From what I have found it is an individual’s personal call to make, but there are some guidelines out there to help with the decision.

“If your symptoms are general malaise ... fatigue, drowsiness, tired, etc. it would be worth a shot to try and start a walk or get your gym clothes on and get a workout started,” said Ally Bowersock, health and exercise program director for the Jefferson College of Health Sciences.

“Sometimes just the five minutes it takes to start a workout or get ready will increase alertness and readiness to exercise.”

I recently was trying to get over a bad cold and decided to take a full week off to rest up and hopefully heal. It is hard to get out of the routine, but I think my body was glad for the break and I don’t have much of an appetite when I am sick so the chances of overeating were pretty slim.

“If you feel sick.. cough, head congestion, headache, joint aches, chills, and so on, it’s best to take some time off,” Bowersock said.

“For one, folks at the gym will not appreciate you sneezing and coughing on the equipment. Two, are you really going to get that great of a workout when your whole body aches from sickness?”

There have been times before my most recent cold that I would try to power through workouts even when I didn’t feel all that great but after hearing Ally’s advice I am more inclined to take a little break with a date for re-starting my regimen once I am feeling stronger.

Ally’s final bit of advice is “Confusing fatigue for illness may result in workouts missed, but working out when you are genuinely fighting infection or illness may do more harm than good.”

Good luck keeping up with your workouts and staying well during the holidays!

McKnew is an anchor for WSLS10.