

EXERCISE AND ARTHRITIS

THE BENEFITS OF EXERCISE

For many years it was thought that people with arthritis should not exercise because it would damage their joints. Along with medicine, rest and other parts of your treatment program, regular exercise can help keep your joints in working order so you can continue your daily activities. It also may help prevent further joint damage.

If you have arthritis or a related condition, exercise is especially important and can help with the following:

- Keep your joints moving;
- Keep the muscles around your joints strong;
- Keep bone and cartilage tissue strong and healthy;
- Improve your ability to do daily activities;
- Improve your overall health and fitness by:
 - Increasing your energy
 - Improving sleep
 - Weight control
 - Strengthening your heart
 - Decreasing depression
 - Improving self-esteem and
 - Sense of well-being.

THREE MAIN TYPES OF EXERCISE

A balanced exercise program includes: range-of-motion (flexibility), strengthening and endurance exercises.

- **Range-of-motion (ROM)** exercises help reduce stiffness and keep your joints flexible. “Range of motion” is the normal amount your joints can be moved in certain directions.
- **Strengthening exercises** help maintain or increase muscle strength and help keep your joints stable and more comfortable. Two common strengthening exercises with people with arthritis are isometric and isotonic.
 - **Isometric exercises** involve tightening the muscles without moving the joint. Examples include quadriceps sets, in which you tighten the large muscle at the front of the thigh, or gluteal sets, in which you tighten the muscles in your buttocks.
 - **Isotonic exercises** involve joint movement to strengthen muscles. Isotonic exercises may seem like ROM exercise, but they become strengthening when you increase the speed at which you do them, increase the number of exercises you do, or add light weight (one to two pounds) to the exercise.
- **Endurance exercises** strengthen the heart. They improve your stamina so that you can work longer without tiring as quickly. Examples include: walking, water exercise and riding a stationary bicycle.

HOW TO GET STARTED

Always consult with your physician before beginning any type of exercise program.

- Start your program with flexibility and strengthening exercises only. Gradually implement an endurance segment. Start with a 5 minute program 3 times a day and build to 15 minutes.
- Try exercising at different times of the day until you decide what works best for you.
- Don't do strenuous exercises just after you eat or just before you go to bed.
- Try to do range-of-motion exercises daily and strengthening and endurance exercises every other day. If you miss a day start where you left off. If you miss several days, you may need to start again at a lower level.
- On days you don't feel like doing much, do a little.



Arthritis

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TIPS FOR BETTER EXERCISE

Before Exercise:

- Apply heat or cold treatments.
- Do a 10-15 minute warm up with gentle ROM and strengthening exercises.
- Wear comfortable clothing and shoes.

During Exercise:

- Exercise at a comfortable and steady pace.
- Breathe out (exhale) as you do the exercise, and breathe in (inhale) as you relax between repetitions.
- Stop exercising if you have chest tightness or severe shortness of breath or feel dizzy, faint or sick to your stomach.
- Know your body's normal reactions to exercise—you may experience an increased heart rate, faster breathing, and tense muscles as you body adapts to your new activities.
- Use the two hour rule: if joint or muscle pain continues for two hours after exercising, you've done too much too fast.

After Exercise:

Do your exercise activity at a slower pace for 5-10 minutes followed by gentle stretching.

For more information contact: Missouri Arthritis & Osteoporosis Program: 1.800.316.0935 or Arthritis Foundation: 1.800.283.7800.

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