

Rural Living with Arthritis

"Life on the farm can be challenging and stressful. As a farmer with arthritis, I have to take care of my disease. I am always looking for practical solutions that help me conserve energy and work more efficient while on the farm."

Don Funkenbusch

Think there's nothing you can do in your rural, agricultural community about arthritis? Think again! Here are some simple ideas and practical solutions that can generally make living and working with arthritis a little easier.

Take charge

The earlier you can get an accurate diagnosis, the better. Early treatment can often mean less joint damage and less pain.

Pay attention to symptoms, see your doctor and get an accurate diagnosis

There are two major types of arthritis, rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis. Ask your doctor which type you have been diagnosed with. Getting the right treatment requires getting the right diagnosis.

Learn the facts

Learn something new about arthritis. Building an understanding of your disease is an important step in managing it.

Protect your joints

Avoid excessive stress on your joints. Ways to accomplish this can be losing weight and wearing soft shoes. Canes, grab bars, and crutches can make tasks easier at home and work.

Watch your weight

Staying close to your recommended weight helps relieve damaging pressure on hips and knees. Carrying around those extra pounds also translates to added stress to your knees and hips. Excess weight can mean more pain, no matter which form of arthritis you have. It can also contribute to and aggravate osteoarthritis, while increasing your risk of gout.

Wear good shoes

A well padded, well fitting shoe with plenty of room for your toes – and their imperfections – can make a world of difference in the way your feet (and the rest of you) feel.

Work smarter

Do something that will make your job easier. No matter where or when you work, take frequent breaks to stretch stiff joints and sore muscles.

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Move, Move, Move

Yes, farmers and ranchers can exercise! Exercise helps lessen pain, increases range of movement, reduces fatigue, and will help you feel better overall. Your doctor, a physical therapist, or other specially trained health care professionals can show you range-of-motion exercises and strengthening exercises that are good for arthritis.

Stretch your legs

Stretching is a simple way to keep joints and muscles flexible. It relieves stress and can help enable you to maintain your daily activities.

Get enough sleep

Sleep restores your energy and rests your joints to reduce pain and swelling. If you feel tired and achy every day, taking a brief nap can help restore your energy.

Take medications as prescribed

Many different types of medication can help control the pain and swelling of arthritis. Your doctor may recommend over-the-counter and/or prescription medication. Make sure you understand and follow the directions.

Pick, pour or peel

If you are looking for a tasty healthy treat, reach for an orange – or a tall glass of orange juice. Why? Recent research has shown the importance of vitamin C and other antioxidants in reducing the risk of osteoarthritis and its progression. Another bonus: oranges and other citrus fruits are good sources of folic acid, which can help alleviate the side effects of the arthritis drug methotrexate and reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease in women who have lupus.

Talk to other farmers and ranchers

Take an opportunity to tell someone — co-worker, friend, and family member — about arthritis. Start with an interesting fact: Did you know that arthritis affects 46 million people? Then go from there. They'll understand you – and the way arthritis affects your life – a little better.