

here is your guide to

Frequently Asked Questions About Managing Arthritis



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Here is a list of frequently asked questions about Managing Arthritis

Will exercise wear out my joints?

Although exercise may cause pain, proper exercise can help nourish the cartilage, strengthen the muscles and prolong the life of your joints.

Which exercises are bad for me?

Impact loading exercises (e.g., running or jumping) put stress on the joints and may cause damage to the remaining cartilage.

All forms of exercise should be cleared with your surgeon.

Does it matter what I eat?

Many claims have been made concerning diet but none has been proven except the relationship between high protein and gout, which can cause arthritis. Too much food causes weight gain, which is very bad for your joints.

How long until I need a joint replacement?

In most cases you can wait as long as you want. Your pain and change of lifestyle will dictate when you are ready.

Is there anything I can take that will regenerate the cartilage?

No, despite wild claims, there is no evidence that we can regenerate cartilage by taking something by mouth. Glucosamine and Chondroitin may strengthen and protect damaged cartilage but they have not been shown to regenerate cartilage.

Is arthritis caused by too much calcium?

No, calcium often accumulates around arthritic joints in response to increased pressure on the joint, but calcium does not cause arthritis. It would not be wise to reduce your calcium intake.

Do vitamins help?

Maybe, studies have shown that people low in vitamins C and D have a higher incidence of arthritis.

Will arthritis spread to other parts of my body?

There are many types of arthritis. Some types of arthritis do affect multiple joints; however, osteoarthritis, the most common type, does not usually affect multiple joints. Some patients may have osteoarthritis in both knees or both hips, but it is rare to see patients with osteoarthritis in both hip and knee joints.

What causes the fluid to build up?

Cartilage breaks off into the joint and causes irritation. The irritation causes the joint to swell, similar to an irritated eye that sheds tears.

Why am I so stiff in the morning or when I get up from a chair?

When a joint has arthritis, the muscles and tendons become tight with inactivity, which causes stiffness when first arising. Moving the joint back and forth before moving will help.

When my knee hurts, should I use heat or cold?

Heat will increase the local circulation, bringing more blood to the area, which makes the muscles and other joint structures stretch more easily. Cold does the opposite by decreasing local circulation and reducing swelling. The

chart below should help you decide what to do.

Heat	Cold
Use prior to activity	Use after exercise
Increases local circulation	Decreases local circulation
Improves motion	Decreases swelling
Decreases joint ache	Better for pain
Helps you relax	Reduces inflammation

What type of exercise should I do?

Swimming is good exercise for arthritis. The water's buoyancy protects your joints from impact injury. The water also resists movement, which is helpful for strengthening. Hydrostatic pressure can also assist with the reduction of swelling in joints and edema in the legs. There are several forms of water exercises: you can swim, participate in an exercise class, or just walk in the water.

Walking is good exercise for arthritis. You should check with your physician to obtain any exercise precautions or guidelines. Walking is an excellent form of endurance exercise for almost anyone. Walking requires no special skills and is inexpensive, but you will need a good pair of shoes. While walking, you should be able to pass the talk test, meaning you should be able to carry on a conversation while exercising without feeling out of breath. If you are unable to talk, slow down to a more comfortable pace.

The following suggested walking program could help you get started. When you can walk 10 continuous minutes (including warm up and cool down) follow this progression to gradually build your program.

WEEK	DURATION	TIMES/WEEK
1	10 min.	3-5
2	15 min.	3-5
3	20 min.	3-5

Continue adding five-minutes to each session until you reach 30-40 minutes in duration. Always warm up and cool down by walking slowly. For an in-depth guide on starting and

maintaining a walking program, look for the Arthritis Foundation book, *Walk With Ease*, at bookstores.

Should stretching or range of motion exercise be part of my exercise routine?

Yes, stretching helps maintain or restore normal joint motion. Flexibility is necessary for comfortable movement during exercise and daily activities. Joint motion also helps lubricate your joints and nourish your cartilage. Flexibility exercises should be done gently. If stretching hurts, you are pushing too hard. Flexibility exercises should be done before any more vigorous types of exercise. Generally, stretching is tolerated on a daily basis and is an excellent form of relaxation. Sarah, all forms of stretching and exercise should be cleared with your surgeon.

What do strengthening exercises do, and why are they important?

Strengthening exercises are important for everyone, especially for a person with arthritis. Joint swelling and pain can make muscles weak. Weak muscles are a problem with arthritis because strong muscles help absorb shock, support joints and protect you from injuries. In addition, weak leg muscles are linked with increased disability from osteoarthritis. Fortunately, research has shown that strengthening exercises in the hip, knee and ankle lead to improved balance and independence. You will need a supervised program to show you the what, whys and hows of strengthening!

How much exercise is too much?

If you note increased joint swelling, decreased joint motion, unusual or persistent fatigue, or continuous pain, you may be doing too much. You should expect some muscle soreness,

especially if you are just beginning your program or have changed exercises. Joint pain should not last more than one hour after exercise.

When should I use a cane?

If you are walking with a limp, you should consider an assistive device. You can damage other joints with an abnormal gait (walking) pattern. A cane helps distribute some force away from the involved leg and reduce pain. Use a cane on the opposite hand of your affected joint. For example, if your left knee hurts, the cane goes on the right. The handle of the cane should reach your wrist when your arm is at your side.

Sitting hurts my back. What is the proper way to sit?

Position yourself as follows:

- Head balanced over shoulders
- Shoulders relaxed, not elevated
- Upper back straight, not rounded
- Lower back supported, a small towel roll often works well
- Knees even with hips
- Buttocks flat on the seat
- Feet flat on floor or footrest

Select a chair that has a firm seat and fairly straight back. Beware of deep, soft chairs or sofas. Change position frequently.

How do I stay consistent with exercise?

- Seek help from a healthcare professional to help you set up a program.
- Make a plan! Write it down!
Set goals!
- Exercise at the same time each day so it becomes part of your routine.
- Find an exercise buddy.
- Look for an appropriate exercise class.
- Stay in the habit of doing some exercise each day. On days when you have more pain, make an effort even if you just do gentle stretching.

- Vary your exercise routine and rotate your exercise.
- Evaluate your progress and enjoy your success.

This information is not intended to replace the experience, guidance and counsel of your orthopedic surgeon. Please talk to your orthopedic surgeon about any questions or concerns you may have about the information provided in this educational brochure.