

Lifestyle Tips



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Physical Activity and Arthritis



Arthritis is defined as inflammation of the joint. While joint pain may sound like a reason to avoid physical activity, the opposite is true! In addition to the numerous health benefits, being physically active can actually help manage arthritis pain. Then again, if

you have arthritis, you have to make sure that you're taking on the right kind of activity. The bottom line is, with a few physical activity routine modifications, people with arthritis can be physically active. Here are some key things to keep in mind when getting active with arthritis:

about getting active, a common problem is taking on too much, too soon. Increases in duration, intensity or complexity of movements should follow a gradual progression.

Avoid rapid or repetitive movements of affected joints. Choose activities that protect your joints and avoid activities with jumping, rapid twisting, turning or sudden stops, as they are



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Begin slowly and progress gradually. Even though you may be enthusiastic



Water activities – Get wet while you get active and your joints will appreciate it. Water supports your body weight and adds resistance, which also enhances muscle strength and endurance. There are therapeutic pools that are specially designed for people with arthritis that are kept at warm temperatures, which help to loosen you up, and have specialized access ramps to make it easier to get in and out of the pool.

Cycling – Cycling is a great indoor or outdoor activity for people with arthritis. When starting out, keep the resistance down, and don't pedal too hard. For those with back pain, try a recumbent bicycle. A recumbent bicycle lets you sit back, supported by a full seat, with your legs in front of you in a horizontal position. This puts less stress on your back than a conventional bicycle.

Physical activity is safe and enjoyable for people with arthritis, but it is important to know your limits. While it's normal to experience some discomfort when being active, sharp pain or more pain than usual are warning signs that something is wrong. Listen to your body, and moving more can become your best medicine.

*Before starting any new exercise program, always check with your health-care provider.

stressful to your knees and spine. You may want to consider special shoes or orthotics for extra support and shock absorption.

Adapt physical activity to the needs of the individual. Joints affected by arthritis may be unstable or have restricted range of motion from pain, stiffness or swelling. Be kind to these joints and don't push their limits, as they are at higher risk for injury.

Canada's Physical Activity Guide recommends choosing a variety of activities from the following three groups: endurance, strength and flexibility. Flexibility activities are particularly important for people with arthritis, because they help maintain or restore normal joint movement and relieve stiffness. Popular endurance activities for people with arthritis include the following:

Walking – Walking is a great activity for people with arthritis because it doesn't put a lot of stress on your joints. Faster walking speeds do increase joint stress, though, so you

should keep your speed in line with your body's ability. Walking is inexpensive and can be done anytime, anywhere— all you need is good pair of shoes. If your arthritis affects your hip, knee, ankle or foot joints, you should check with your health-care provider.

