

Arthritis and Exercise

For most people arthritis pain and inflammation cannot be avoided as the body ages. In fact, most people over the age of 50 show some signs of arthritis: the AC joint, a part of the shoulder, is the first to show signs in those over 40. Joints naturally degenerate over time. Fortunately, arthritis can be managed through a combination of medication, exercise, rest, weight-management, nutrition, and, in some cases, surgery. Your doctor can tell if you have arthritis through blood tests and x-rays. They will then be able to help you decide on the best treatment for your joint.

Learning the Signs and Symptoms of Arthritis



Arthritis includes a group of disorders that affect your joints and muscles. Symptoms include joint pain, inflammation and limited movement of joints. When a joint is inflamed it may be swollen, tender, warm to the touch or red. Surrounding each joint is a protective capsule holding a lubricating fluid to aid in motion. Cartilage, a slippery smooth substance, covers the bones to assure an even, fluid motion in the joint. With joint arthritis, the cartilage may be damaged, narrowed and lost by a degenerative process or by inflammation making movement painful. You can start to

protect your joints by avoiding excess stress and perhaps by using assistive devices. A major goal of all arthritis treatment is the preservation of joint integrity while maintaining function.

Will special exercises really help?

Regular, moderate exercise offers a whole host of benefits to people with arthritis.

1. Reduces joint pain and stiffness
2. Builds strong muscle around the joints
3. Increases flexibility and endurance
4. Helps promote overall health and fitness by giving you more energy, helping you sleep better, controlling your weight, decreasing depression and giving you more self-esteem.
5. Help stave off other health problems such as osteoporosis and heart disease.
6. The most important benefit of exercising is that people are able to figure out their particular strengths and weaknesses thereby reducing flare ups and irritations.



Recommendations: Dancing, gentle weight lifting with low weights and high repetitions and bike riding are good exercises for people with arthritis. You could also try a water exercise program available through your local swimming pool or community center. These programs involve

special movements in the pool, with much of your body's weight held up by water.

Talk to your doctor or physical therapist before starting a brand new exercise program.

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