

ARTHRITIS FIGHT IT!

To get the best results, you need to form close ties with your health-care team and become a full partner in your health-care treatment.

Learning daily living strategies to manage your arthritis gives you a greater feeling of control and a more positive outlook.

To support arthritis research or to learn more, contact The Arthritis Society:



1.800.321.1433



www.arthritis.ca



The Arthritis Society's
**LIFESTYLE
SERIES**



Physical Activity & Arthritis



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Contents

Introduction	2
What is arthritis?	2
Your arthritis health-care team	4
How can physical activity help you manage your arthritis?	4
Managing pain	6
A beginner's checklist	7
Active living	7
ParticipACTION asks, how active are you?	9
Getting started with exercise	10
Activities for arthritis	12
Staying active with inflamed joints or during a flare-up	22
Important advice to make the most of physical activity	22
Overcoming barriers	25
Points to remember	28
Further reading	29
Useful resources	30

The Arthritis Society would like to thank Alla, June, Mary, Richard and Tatyana for demonstrating the exercises in this booklet and the physical-activity possibilities for people living with arthritis.

Introduction

This booklet explains how carefully planned physical activity can help you manage arthritis. Included are valuable tips and a detailed list of the various types of physical activities and exercises from which you can choose.

Is there a difference between physical activity and exercise?

In this booklet, **physical activity** refers to activities that are a part of your everyday life. They include household, workplace and lifestyle activities that can be used to help you become more active. **Exercise** is a type of physical activity that uses exertion to improve at least one aspect of your physical fitness. Many of the sample exercises listed in this booklet are exercises with specific benefits for people with arthritis.

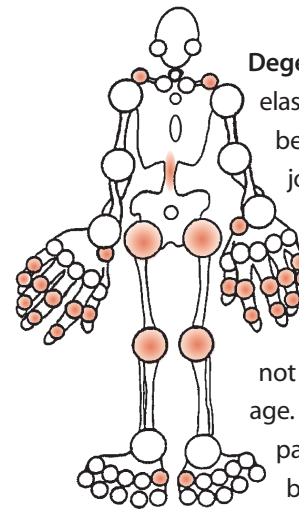
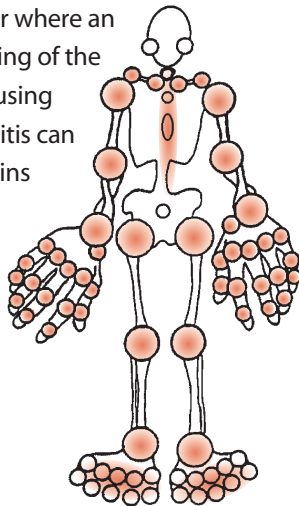
It is also important to consider whether your regular diet is giving you all the important basic nutrients. If it does not, then your general health will suffer and this may have an effect on your arthritis.

What is arthritis?

The word arthritis means inflammation of the joint ("arth" meaning joint and "itis" meaning inflammation). Inflammation is a medical term describing pain, stiffness, redness and swelling.

There are more than 100 types of arthritis. Some are caused by joint inflammation, while others are caused by joint degeneration. Arthritis is among the leading causes of disability in Canada, affecting nearly 4.5 million people of every age, physical condition and ethnic background.

Inflammatory arthritis is an autoimmune disorder where an individual's own antibodies attack tissue in the lining of the joints and, sometimes, in other internal organs, causing inflammation, swelling and pain. This type of arthritis can affect any joint and start at any age, but often begins between the ages of 30 to 60 in both men and women. Many joints are usually affected in a symmetrical pattern, most often the small joints of the hands and feet, wrists, elbows, shoulders, neck, spine, knees and hips.



Degenerative arthritis occurs when cartilage (the tough elastic material that covers and protects the ends of bones) begins to wear away. Cartilage is an essential part of the joint; not only does it act as a shock absorber, it also enables the joint to move smoothly. With degenerative arthritis, the cartilage erodes, eventually resulting in pain, stiffness, swelling and bone-on-bone movement in the affected joint. This type of arthritis is not a disease of the elderly but is more common as we age. One or two joints are affected in an asymmetrical pattern, most often the joints at the base of the thumb, big toe, knee, hip, neck and lower back.

People with arthritis often find that their ability to perform daily tasks is limited due to the effects of the disease. Even buttoning a shirt or opening a door can be difficult as a result of pain and loss of flexibility.

There is no cure for arthritis, but there is hope. When you are diagnosed early and start the right treatment plan, you can take control of your disease and help reduce damage to your joints. Most people with arthritis can lead active and productive lives with the help of the right medication, healthy eating, exercise, rest and joint-protection techniques.



Your arthritis health-care team

Many people can help you manage your arthritis. Your team may include a variety of health-care providers, depending on your needs and the community you live in. For example, your team may include a family doctor, rheumatologist, nurse practitioner, nurse, occupational therapist, physiotherapist, social worker, pharmacist, dietitian, psychologist and orthopedic surgeon. Although you are the leader of your health-care team, you should have one health-care professional that you rely on as a co-captain, as this person can help clarify questions you may have or refer you to another professional to ensure you are on the right track in managing your arthritis.



How can physical activity help you manage your arthritis?

If there were ever a reason not to be physically active, arthritis pain would seem to be it. In fact, research shows quite the opposite. Properly designed activities may not only decrease your arthritis pain, but may also increase your flexibility and overall fitness – and it can do wonders for your state of mind.

Physical activity brings an even more direct benefit. Did you know you're "feeding" your joints when you're active? Cartilage depends on joint movement to absorb nutrients and remove waste. Cartilage, ligaments and bone also become stronger and more resilient with regular exercise. Physical activity and exercise actually help keep joints healthy.

Maintaining a healthy body weight is another important part of arthritis management. Just 10 pounds of excess weight can put you at greater risk of developing osteoarthritis (OA) in your knees. Did you know that losing 10 pounds of excess weight decreases stress on your knees by 40 pounds? By increasing physical activity, you can make a difference to your joints and overall health.

Here's another way to look at it: active living is a part of your treatment program where you can assert control. It's a chance to confront arthritis directly, discover new activities or reclaim some favourite activities arthritis has made difficult for you.

The benefits of regular activity and exercise include:

- Decreased pain
- Increased muscle strength and endurance
- Increased bone strength and quality
- Healthy joints
- Increased joint range of motion
- Enhanced ability to perform everyday activities
- Greater fitness level
- Better sleep
- Improved balance
- Reduced risk of falls
- Enhanced self-confidence
- Healthy body weight
- Improved ability to manage stress



Managing pain

Pain is one of the hallmark symptoms of arthritis. It may come and go as your arthritis flares or subsides, but for most people with arthritis, pain will never entirely disappear.

Pain should not interfere with something as vital to your physical and emotional well-being as physical activity. People with arthritis **CAN** be physically active. It can help to have a trained professional, such as a physiotherapist, design, modify and monitor your routine.

The physical activities you engage in should address your specific needs. Start slowly and pace yourself. When it comes to exercising with arthritis, more is not necessarily better. As you work out, listen to your body and don't overdo it. If you experience pain two hours after you exercise, you may want to work with a physiotherapist. A physiotherapist can help you distinguish the difference between 'muscle' pain and 'joint' pain. 'Muscle' pain (within limits) is normal, just like when you do something you haven't done for a while. 'Joint' pain is not normal and is not something you should be experiencing. If you do experience 'joint' pain after an activity, your activity will need some modification.

A physiotherapist can design, modify and monitor your exercise routine.



A beginner's checklist

If you're just starting to become active or haven't been for a while, this checklist is a good starting point.

- You've consulted with your health-care provider to determine your readiness to start being active (especially if you have joint deformity, significant pain and muscle weakness, or have recently undergone joint surgery).
- You know that setting goals that are within reach is the best strategy for long-term gains.
- You have an idea of how much time to devote to physical activity and exercise, and when in your schedule you can fit it in.
- You are aware that you may feel increased pain and stiffness at first, but that it should soon disappear.
- You know to listen to your body and to balance increased activity with rest periods during the day.
- You've made a list of fitness activities that you'd really like to do and researched what The Arthritis Society has to offer locally, as well as what's available through other local community resources.
- You've identified appropriate flexibility, strength and endurance activities that will help you become more physically active and mobile.

Active living

If you are not physically active or have never exercised before, starting a new routine might seem intimidating. Actually, physical activity doesn't have to be difficult. You can gain significant health benefits just by being active in your daily life. Being physically active means much more than traditional exercise.

Medical experts say that your body is designed to move, and it's surprising how little time it takes to become and stay healthy. *Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living* says that 30 minutes of physical activity at a moderate pace most days will produce major benefits for adults and older adults.

If you are just starting out and want to be more active at a lighter intensity (such as going for a stroll, stretching or doing some light gardening), strive to eventually reach 60 minutes of physical activity most days. Moreover, this activity doesn't have to be done all at once. You can add up your activities, 10 minutes at a time, to reach that daily total. As a way to get you thinking about activity, The Arthritis Society asked ParticipACTION to design a quiz. It follows after the physical activity tips listed below.

Try incorporating one or more of the following into your daily routine:

- Take frequent “stretch” breaks at work to walk to the water cooler or washroom.
- Return emails in person by walking to your colleague’s work area.
- Choose a parking spot furthest away from the entrance.
- Make more than one trip from the car to the house with the groceries.
- Walk to the local convenience store instead of driving.
- Choose stairs instead of the elevator or escalator (if your knees don’t bother you).
- View everyday chores (cleaning, laundry, taking out the garbage) as a chance to be more active.
- Get off one stop early if you take public transit.
- Get in the garden and dig, prune, rake and weed.



ParticipACTION asks, how active are you?

You can learn ways to become more active based on the categories listed below.

For each category, pick the statement that best describes you:

Going places.

- a** When I go to the mall, I park in the spot closest to the entrance.
- b** I get off the bus two stops before the one closest to my home.
- c** Going to work I ride my bike a half an hour each way.

Free time.

- a** I get up from the couch to go to the refrigerator at least three times each evening.
- b** Most evenings I go for a walk around the block after dinner.
- c** My weekends are spent outside hiking, skiing and camping.

Sports and leisure.

- a** I subscribe to all the TV sport speciality channels.
- b** I play in a recreational volleyball league once a week.
- c** I run a few times per week and compete regularly in road races.

Tuning out.

- a** Every room in my home has either a TV or computer, including the bathroom.
- b** I use a computer at work and I watch a couple of TV shows each week.
- c** When I watch TV I do sit-ups and push-ups during the commercials.

Mostly **a**s

If you answered mostly **a**'s, you are probably not getting 60 minutes a day of physical activity as recommended in Canada's *Physical Activity Guide*. In addition, you may be spending long periods of time sitting. ParticipACTION reminds you that being physically active for 60 minutes every day will improve your health. You can start slowly, doing activities you enjoy for just 10 minutes at a time, and build up. Get into some healthy, active habits!

Mostly **b**s

If you answered mostly **b**'s, chances are you are getting the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity a day most days of the week. ParticipACTION says, keep up the good work! Make sure you are being physically active every day – you don't have to reinvent your life, just focus on doing the activities you already do now, more often.

Mostly **c**s

If you answered mostly **c**'s, you are most likely physically active for more than 60 minutes a day and surpass the recommended guidelines. ParticipACTION says, awesome job! The other recommendation in Canada's *Physical Activity Guide* is that you vary your type of activity. Be certain to choose from a variety of activities that include endurance, flexibility and strength.

Getting started with exercise

One, two, three... exercise. If only it were that easy. For better results, a good program requires a bit of research and planning, some goal-setting and some record-keeping to chart your progress. Before starting any new exercise program, always check with your health-care provider to ensure you are physically ready.

If you have more severe arthritis, accompanied by joint deformity, pain and muscle weakness, it's important to consult with a physiotherapist. You don't want to hurt yourself. Having an expert coach at your side is a sensible precaution. The same holds true if you recently underwent joint surgery.



Here are some helpful tips as you start getting physically active

- Consider activities designed for groups. Sharing the experience can be enjoyable and help keep you motivated.
- Explore community resources and classes that include activities, such as Tai Chi, low-impact dance, aquafit or mall-walking.
- Before you commit to any one activity, consider the settings in which you feel most comfortable (indoor or outdoor, winter or summer, alone or in a group) or attend a class first before you sign up.
- Make sure you have supportive and comfortable footwear and clothing that is weather / activity appropriate.
- Set goals that are S.M.A.R.T.: Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Realistic and Time-bound!
- Remember, if you haven't exercised or been very active in a while, you may experience some muscle stiffness, joint tenderness and pain, and fatigue in the evenings.
- Do not take pain medication specifically before exercising, as the medication could hide the pain meant to warn you that you're pushing yourself too hard or that you've injured yourself. A wiser course is to plan your exercise periods and active times to coincide with times when your normal, daily regimen of arthritis medications are most effective at reducing pain.
- Give yourself rest breaks during the day to compensate for the increased activity. Many types of arthritis, such as rheumatoid arthritis, lupus and others, are characterized by bouts of extreme tiredness and flu-like symptoms that leave you drained of energy. Balancing your activities, exercise and rest times is critical to staying healthy and physically active.



Activities for arthritis

Now it's time to put your plan into action.

According to the Public Health Agency of Canada, there are three main types of physical activity:

1 Flexibility

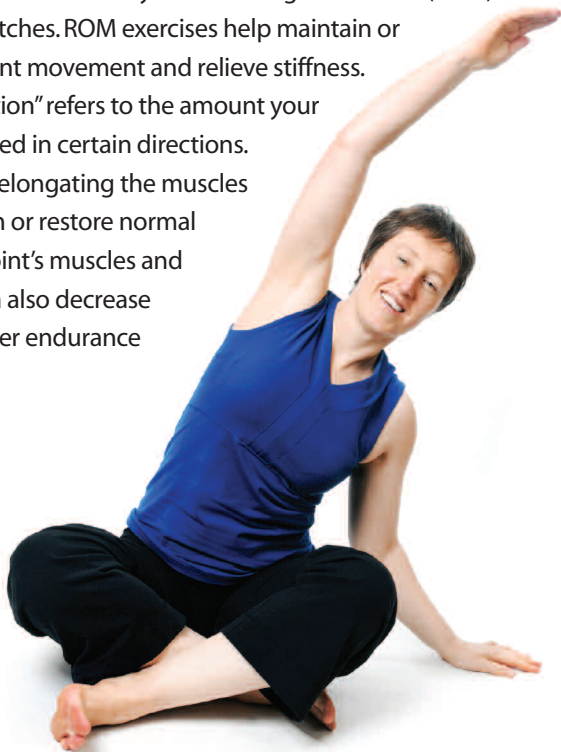
2 Strength

3 Endurance

In this section, you will find descriptions and some examples of each type of physical activity. For more information or to download a free copy of *Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living*, please visit www.paguide.com.

Flexibility

Activities that relate to flexibility include Range of Motion (ROM) exercises and stretches. ROM exercises help maintain or restore normal joint movement and relieve stiffness. The "range of motion" refers to the amount your joints can be moved in certain directions. Stretches refer to elongating the muscles and help maintain or restore normal flexibility to the joint's muscles and tendons. They can also decrease muscle aching after endurance activities.



Important tips for flexibility activities

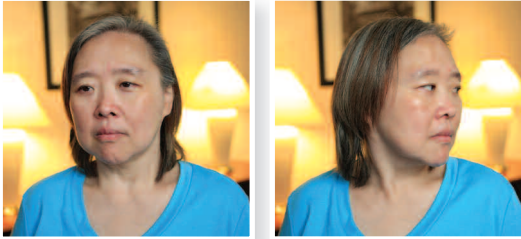
- Flexibility activities are best done daily in a non-weight-bearing position, such as lying or sitting on your bed or couch.
- When doing ROM exercises, move your joints within the full range as much as you can tolerate and not any further.
- If your joints are painful, your ROM will be limited, but you should still move within your limits every day.
- For ROM exercises, if the joint you're moving is healthy or has arthritis and isn't currently painful, you can repeat these activities five to 10 times, holding each position no more than three seconds.
- Stretches are best done when the muscles are warm, such as after a walk or fitness class.
- Stretches can be repeated two to three times, while being held for 10 to 30 seconds each.
- Stretches should be a smooth movement; avoid bouncing or jerking.
- If the joint you're moving is hot, swollen, painful or in a flare-up, avoid stretches for that day.

ROM and stretching exercises

Here are examples of ROM and stretching exercises available on The Arthritis Society's website at www.arthritis.ca/tips/exercise.

Neck turn

Slowly turn your head left so that you are looking over your left shoulder, then turn it right to look over your right shoulder. Finally, turn your head back to the centre.



Shoulder circles

With shoulders relaxed and arms resting loosely at your sides (or in your lap if you're seated), gently roll your shoulders forward, up, back and down. Reverse direction. You can do this exercise alternating shoulders or both at the same time.



ROM and stretching exercises help relieve stiffness!

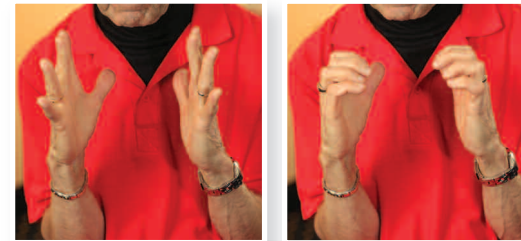
Forward arm lift

Sitting or standing, start with both arms hanging loosely at your sides. Keep your palms toward your sides, with thumbs up. Lift your arms forward and up past your ears. Then slowly lower them back to your sides.



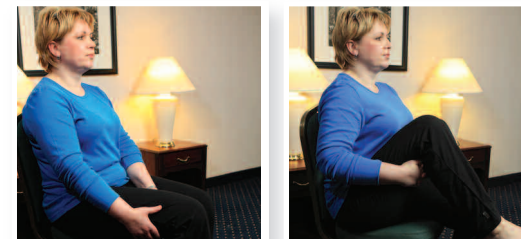
Finger tuck

Hold one hand up pointing to the ceiling, fingers and knuckles straight. Bend your fingers and tuck the tips down. Keep your knuckles straight, making sure they don't move. Stretch your fingers back up to their original position. Change sides.



Knee raises

Sit on the edge of a chair or stool with your back straight. Lift your knee as high as you can without bending your back. You can assist your knee higher with your hands. Keeping your abdominals tight, slowly lower your leg back to the starting position.



Elbow bend

With your arms hanging loosely at your sides, bend your elbow, bringing your hand up so your fingers touch your shoulder. Then slowly lower your arm back to your side.



Hip swing

Standing behind and slightly to the left of a sturdy, straight-backed chair, with knees slightly bent and hands on the chair for support, slowly swing your left leg forward and then back. Keep your back straight and your lower abdominal muscles pulled in. Try not to arch your spine. Repeat with your right leg.



Ankle circles

Sitting properly in a straight-backed kitchen chair, lift your left leg with your knee straight and draw a circle in the air with your big toe. Reverse the direction of the circle. Be sure to keep your leg still. Repeat with the right leg.



Besides the options listed in this booklet, there are a number of day-to-day activities that help improve flexibility. They include mopping, vacuuming and gardening.

Strength

Strength activities increase the muscle's ability to provide support and stability to a joint. There are two types that are commonly prescribed for people with arthritis: isometric and isotonic. Isometric strength exercises strongly tighten your muscles without moving painful joints, while isotonic strength exercises use weights or elastic fitness bands to apply mild resistance to the joint as you put it through its range of motion. Strength activities should not be started without the guidance of an expert; he or she will ensure you have the proper form and technique, preventing the chances of injury or misalignment.

Important tips for strength activities

- Strength exercises should be done every other day so that you have a day of rest in between. *Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living* recommends incorporating strengthening activities two to four times per week.
- When starting out, you should use light weights or resistance bands.
- Pick a resistance that allows you to do 10 to 15 repetitions. As your strength improves and this becomes easy, you can progress to heavier weights or stronger resistance bands and continue to progress to a weight or resistance level you can tolerate.
- If the joint you're moving is healthy or has arthritis but isn't painful, you can repeat the strength exercises 10 times. If the joint continues to be pain-free, then you can increase the number of repetitions to three sets of 10.
- Always take a break after each set and in between activities.
- If the joint you're moving is slightly swollen and only mildly painful, cut the repetitions in half and increase their number only very gradually.
- If the joint you're moving is hot, swollen and painful, do not perform strengthening exercises without first consulting your health-care provider.

Isometric exercises

Here are samples of the isometric activities available on The Arthritis Society's website at www.arthritis.ca/tips/exercise.

Backward shoulder press

Stand with your back against a wall and your heels six centimetres (three inches) out from the wall. Keep one arm bent at the elbow. Push back against the wall using only the upper part of your bent arm. Hold for a count of five seconds and relax. Repeat 10 times. Then repeat with your other arm.



Leg push

Lie flat on your back on your bed with your right knee bent and your left leg straight. Squeeze your buttocks as you push your left leg down into the bed. Hold for five seconds and repeat 10 times before changing to the right leg.

Important note: When doing isometric exercises, tense your muscle with no more than 60% of your maximum effort. This will help to keep the pressure inside your joint low and reduce the risk of increasing your blood pressure.

Besides the options listed in this booklet, there are a number of day-to-day activities that help improve your strength. They include raking and carrying leaves, lifting and carrying groceries, and climbing the stairs.

Isotonic exercises

Here are samples of the isotonic activities available on The Arthritis Society's website at www.arthritis.ca/tips/exercise.



Chest press

Use an elastic fitness band for resistance. Sitting in a straight-backed chair, hold one end of the band in each hand after passing the band snugly across your shoulder blades and under your arms. (An alternative is to loop the band across the back of the chair if you find the elastic is bothersome against your back.) Your elbows should be bent and your thumbs up. Straighten your elbows, pressing your arms forward. Hold for a beat and then relax.



Leg elastic press

Use an elastic fitness band for resistance. Make a loose loop with your fitness band that's slightly larger than your waistband size. Lie flat on your back with the loop encircling both legs just above the knee. Keep one leg still and slide the other leg away until the loop is taut. Hold for a count of five and relax. Repeat 10 times before changing sides.

Endurance

Endurance activities improve the health of your heart, lungs and circulatory system, thereby increasing your stamina so that you can work longer without tiring as quickly.

Important tips for endurance activities

- When you start out, you should strive for a moderate intensity level where you can still talk comfortably and feel warm with some sweating.
- You should aim to engage in endurance activities four to seven days a week at a moderate pace for 30 minutes.
- Avoid activities that include jumping, rapid twisting, turning and sudden stops, as they are very stressful to your knees and spine.
- Some aerobic fitness classes, racquet and contact sports, and jogging should also be avoided, as they can aggravate joint pain and put you at risk for joint injury.

Recommended endurance activities

There are many endurance activities, so you should be able to find at least one that is **ENJOYABLE** and appropriate for your joints.



Walking

For people with arthritis, walking puts less stress on your joints and is considered to be much better and safer than running. Walking allows you to stretch your back and leg muscles and joints that can become stiff from sitting. Walking is also relatively inexpensive; all you need is a good pair of walking shoes that have flexible soles and provide adequate arch support. Another benefit of walking is that it can be done at almost any time in any place. If you have hip, knee, ankle or foot problems, you should confirm with your health-care provider that this is an appropriate activity for you.

Water activities

Water activities are helpful because your body weight is supported, and moving through the water adds resistance. This boosts muscle strength and endurance. Activities such as stretching or walking through water can exercise the joints without putting them under strain. The soothing warmth and buoyancy of warm water make it an ideal environment for relieving arthritis pain and stiffness.

You don't have to be a good swimmer to exercise in water! You can use the shallow end of the pool, hold on to the side or use a flotation device.

A water temperature of 84°F to 88°F is recommended. Since exercising in water is relatively easy, you may be tempted to overdo it. If you're in an aquafit class, start off slowly and don't try to compete with the more experienced participants or keep up with the music.

Cycling

Cycling, whether done outdoors or on a stationary bicycle, strengthens muscles and is also a good cardiovascular workout for your heart and lungs. Just remember that the seat height should be adjusted so that your knee is slightly bent when the pedal is at its lowest point. For those with a sore back, the seat and handlebars should be adjusted to ensure your back is not too stretched out. If you are using a stationary bicycle, a recumbent model can decrease back strain, as you will be sitting up while cycling. Cycling is an ideal endurance activity because it provides much-needed resistance; however, if you have knee problems, you should start slowly and use the least amount of resistance when cycling. A lower resistance can be achieved by ensuring your gears are at the lowest setting.



Other popular endurance activities include golfing without a ride-on cart, yard and garden work, and low-impact dancing.



Staying active with inflamed joints or during a flare-up

Overuse of an actively inflamed (hot, painful, swollen) joint may aggravate the inflammation and increase joint damage. It's important that you "read" your body and the state of your joints so you can adjust your exercise routine as necessary. If you have a flare-up, you need to rest your inflamed joints by avoiding vigorous activity.

In order to keep your joints healthy, however, you need to continue moving them. You should maintain the range-of-motion exercises that have been recommended for you. Move each joint slowly and gently through its entire range of motion. Three repetitions done daily within your pain-free range may even decrease and shorten the flare-up.

As well, choose an endurance activity with a lower impact. Swimming or stationary bicycling can be substituted for walking when you have hip, knee or ankle pain.

As your flare-up subsides, you can gradually resume your normal activities and exercise routine. However, you will need to start at a lower level than before the onset of the flare-up. This means decreasing your repetitions, resistance and intensity.

Important advice to make the most of physical activity

Here is some advice that will help as you introduce physical activity into your routine.

Apply heat or cold treatments

Many people manage pain from activities by applying heat or cold. Examples of using heat include simple things like a warm shower, a towel

warmed in a microwave or a hot water bottle. More advanced methods include a moist hot pack where the person using it needs to be very aware of guarding from burns and overheating the skin.

Heat helps because it increases the circulation. People with arthritis need to know when to use heat. For instance, if your joints are swollen or hot, heat should not be used. If your joints are not swollen or hot, heat may help your stiffness before you exercise.

Cold can also be beneficial, especially after exercise. Examples of using cold include simple things like using a bag of frozen peas over the joint for 10 minutes after exercise and gentle icing with an ice popsicle. People with arthritis may often find it is easier to apply cold than heat because, like the general population, there is a numbing sensation with cold which temporarily helps the pain and cold can counteract mild swelling that may arise as a result of exercise.

Warm up and cool down

Before doing flexibility, strength or endurance exercises, you need to warm up for five to 15 minutes. Warming up prepares your body to be active. When warming up, walk slowly or do a slower version of your planned exercise, followed up by gentle stretches. A gentle stretch of the muscles and tissues around the joint can be achieved by moving toward the end of your full range of motion and holding for five seconds. Any muscles that will be used during your exercises should be properly warmed up.

When you have finished exercising, it's important that you cool down by repeating the same steps you did for warming up. This is the best time to properly stretch your muscles. This process should also take five to 15 minutes and allows your heart rate and breathing to return to normal.



Drink fluids

To avoid dehydration, drink enough fluids both before and after exercising. These fluids should supplement the eight eight-ounce glasses of water every day that experts recommend. When exercising, it's useful to have a bottle of water with you.



Keep it fun!

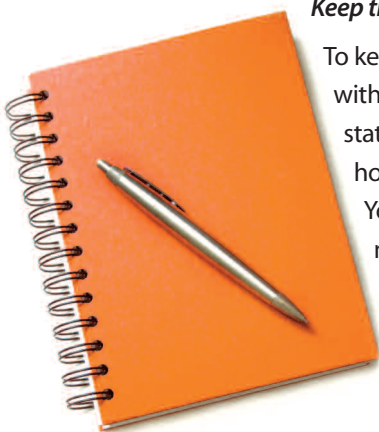
Being physically active is a vital part of maintaining your health, but that doesn't mean it has to be boring. Remember, when you're looking for activities, gravitate towards those that are the most appropriate and appealing, invite a friend or join a fitness group. The social interaction and the benefits of being active will make you feel better inside and out.

Pace yourself

Take it easy at the beginning. It's natural to feel your heart beat a little faster, your breathing speed up a little and your body get warmer. Make sure you can speak normally while you're being active. It's important that you avoid doing too much too soon when exercising with arthritis, as this might interfere with your progress and prevent you from enjoying the benefits of activity. Be alert for warning signs, such as sharp pain or more pain than usual, since pain often means something is wrong.

Keep track of your progress

To keep yourself motivated and engaged with your program, make an action plan stating your goals, chosen exercises and how long you will stick with this plan. You can monitor your progress by maintaining a journal, noting what you did and how you felt. After about four weeks, see if you're making progress toward your goal.



An excellent way of keeping track of your progress is by signing up for The Arthritis Society's Lifestyle Makeover Challenge. It begins as a four-week challenge to encourage participants to become more active and eat healthier to delay the onset and reduce the pain and stiffness of arthritis. The program lets you set your own Lifestyle Makeover Challenge goals. As a participant, you receive a kit that includes a personal contract and activity tracker designed to help chart your progress. For more information or to sign up, visit www.arthritis.ca/lifestyle.



Reward yourself

Once you have become active and reached some of your goals, it's important to reward yourself. A good reward can help motivate you when you hit a barrier and help you enjoy your physical activities even more.

Overcoming barriers

Increasing your level of physical activity or starting an exercise program can be difficult and you may face many challenges, such as pain, fatigue and lack of motivation. All too often, it's easy to find a reason not to begin. Here are some common problems you may confront and some advice to overcome them.

"I'm in too much pain."

It's important to remember that, in the long term, physical activity will decrease the pain caused by your arthritis. Try exercising while sitting, lying down or in water. Applying heat or cold treatments where appropriate can neutralize the pain and allow you to get the exercise your body needs. If you have osteoarthritis, apply heat or ice 20 minutes prior to exercising. If you have an inflammatory type of arthritis, apply ice to your affected joints 20 minutes prior to your activity.

"I'm tired."

Fatigue is a common symptom of arthritis, but it's also increased by inactivity. Being active will actually increase your energy levels and let you get more out of your day. If your activities leave you feeling overly tired, you're probably doing too much too fast. Remember to start your program slowly and to set reasonable goals that are achievable.



"The weather is bad."

You can be as physically active indoors as outdoors. If you find outside conditions too hot or cold, try walking on a treadmill in the gym, swimming at a community pool, walking around a museum or stretching while watching TV.

"There isn't enough time."

For the 15 to 19 hours for which you are likely awake every day, you only need to accumulate 30 to 60 minutes of activity to reach the level recommended by experts. If you can't commit an uninterrupted 30 minutes or an hour, you can always divide your routine into shorter intervals. When planning your program, take into consideration time needed for work, hobbies or family, and decide which parts of the day you can set aside for exercise.

"I can't afford a gym membership."

Who says you have to exercise in a gym? One of the many great benefits of physical activity is that it can be inexpensive. State-of-the-art equipment is not mandatory! It costs you nothing to walk inside a mall. If you can't afford weights, use cans of food, bottles of water or resistance bands. To find out about other innovative ways of working out, get exercise books, videos and DVDs from your local library or at a participating office of The Arthritis Society. A list of helpful resources available for purchase can be found on The Arthritis Society's website at www.arthritis.ca/bookstore.

"It's boring."

Once you make physical activity part of your routine, you can overcome your feelings of boredom, especially when you combine activity with other regular items on your schedule. You can meet your walking target, for example, when you go to the bank or do your shopping. Perhaps you may want to vary your activities. There are many ways you can make them fun: choose activities you enjoy, listen to music, watch television or ask a friend to join you.

"I'm not experiencing pain anymore."

That's great news, and physical activity likely has a lot to do with it. But that's no reason to stop being active. Continued activity will keep your joints healthy and decrease the possibility of a relapse or flare-up.

"I'm afraid of falling or losing my balance."

If a fear of falling is holding you back, start by doing activities on a chair, in your bed or leaning against a wall. You will notice that, as you progress, you will increase your strength, your balance will improve and you can gradually increase the number of activities you complete standing without support.





Points to remember

Here are some important points for you to remember when becoming physically active:

- Remember that it's never too late to start.
- Plan activities with help from your health-care provider.
- Develop your routine over several weeks or months.
- Aim to be active for 30 to 60 minutes most days of the week.
- Listen to your body.
- Break up your activities so they work best for you.
- Plan your day so that you can be active without being exhausted.
- Have fun.
- Keep going; it's human to have bouts of inactivity, but remember that you can start over any time.

Further Reading

Action Plan for Arthritis: Your Guide to Pain-Free Movement

A Lynn Millar, Human Kinetics, Windsor, ON, 2003.

ISBN-10: 0736046518, 201 pages.

Arthritis of the Hip and Knee: The Active Person's Guide to Taking Charge

Ronald J. Allen, Victoria Anne Brander, and S. David Stulberg,

Peachtree Publishers Ltd., Atlanta, GA, 1998.

ISBN-10: 1561451495, 240 pages.

Healing Moves: How to Cure, Relieve, and Prevent Common Ailments with Exercise

Carol and Mitchell Krucoff, Harmony, New York, NY, 2004.

ISBN-10: 1594111146, 312 pages.

Living Well with Arthritis: A Sourcebook for Understanding and Managing Your Arthritis

Dianne Mosher, Howard Stein and Gunnar Kraag, Penguin Canada, 2005.

ISBN-10: 0143055585, 432 pages.

The Arthritis Helpbook: A Tested Self-Management Program for Coping with Arthritis and Fibromyalgia

Kate Lorig and James F. Fries, Perseus Books, 2006, 6th Edition.

ISBN-10: 0738210382, 386 pages.

The Book of Exercise and Yoga for Those with Arthritis, Fibromyalgia and Related Conditions

Lori Newell, Sacred Space Health Center Inc., 2005.

ISBN-10: 0976588129, 190 pages.

Walk with Ease: Your Guide for Walking for Better Health, Improved Fitness and Less Pain

The Arthritis Foundation, Atlanta, GA, 2002, 2nd Edition.

ISBN-10: 091242334X, 125 pages.

Useful Resources

Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living (Public Health Agency of Canada)

The *Physical Activity Guide* provides guidelines and advice to children, youth, adults and older adults in terms of how often to be active and the types of activities needed to improve health and fitness. The Guide provides tips to help you get started and maintain an active lifestyle that will improve your health, help prevent disease and allow you to get the most out of life. To download a free copy, visit www.paguide.com.

ParticipACTION

ParticipACTION is the national voice for physical activity and sport participation in Canada. Through leadership in communications, capacity building and knowledge exchange, ParticipACTION's mission is to inspire and support Canadians to move more. For information, visit www.participaction.com.

Canadian Physiotherapy Association

Learn more about the many ways physiotherapy is improving the mobility of Canadians or find a physiotherapist in your area by using the "find a physiotherapist" tool at www.physiotherapy.ca.



Ways you can Fight Arthritis

Call The Arthritis Society

Our toll-free number can connect you with trained volunteers to provide you with support and information. **1.800.321.1433**

Join the Free Arthritis Registry

You will receive specific information to manage your arthritis and improve your quality of life. www.arthritis.ca/registry

Enrol in the Arthritis Self-Management Program (ASMP)

ASMP is a six-week program for people with arthritis, their family and friends. Trained leaders with first-hand experience of arthritis lead the weekly, interactive two-hour workshops. Program participants will gain self-confidence in their ability to control symptoms, learn how to develop action plans to manage their arthritis and make connections with others living with arthritis. www.arthritis.ca/asmp

Use Arthritis Friendly Products

The Arthritis Society is proud to recognize manufacturers that have designed products that are easy to use for people with arthritis. For a complete list of products that have been commended by The Arthritis Society and deemed "Arthritis Friendly," visit our website. www.arthritis.ca/arthritisfriendly

Make a Donation

The Arthritis Society is fighting for a world without arthritis and helps people live their lives to the fullest by combating the limitations arthritis can impose daily. We trust that you found this information valuable and helpful as you battle arthritis. Please help us continue funding arthritis research, educational programming and services, and make a donation today. To donate, visit us online at www.arthritis.ca, call 1.800.321.1433 or cut out the form below and mail it to: **Attention: Data Services, The Arthritis Society, 393 University Avenue, Suite 1700, Toronto, ON M5G 1E6.**

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I would like to help FIGHT ARTHRITIS by making a donation to The Arthritis Society.

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Address: _____

City: _____ Province: _____ Postal Code: _____

Tel: _____ Email: _____

Here is my gift of: \$25 \$50 \$100 Other \$ _____

Enclosed is my cheque, payable to The Arthritis Society. OR

Please charge my: Visa MasterCard American Express

Card Number: _____ Expiry Date: _____

Signature: _____

