

Exercise to Improve Arthritis

Physical activity is an important part of a healthy lifestyle, it helps us to maintain a healthy weight, prevents chronic disease and improves mental health. It also helps people who have been diagnosed with osteoarthritis and other rheumatic conditions that affect the joints.

Sometimes exercise has been thought to cause arthritis. However, evidence shows the opposite. Inactivity and obesity are the leading causes of arthritis. Regular exercises can strengthen muscles and reduce the likelihood of arthritis. Studies also show that the anti-inflammatory effect from exercise on arthritic joints can provide a protective effect on the joints and joint cartilage.

Everyone should get 150 to 300 minutes of physical activity each week. That includes moderate aerobic type of activity and include two additional days of muscle strengthening activity. This is also true for people with arthritis because regular, moderate intensity exercise has been shown to lessen the pain and improve quality of life.

Joint friendly exercises are recommended for people with arthritis. These include Cardiovascular exercises such as walking, bicycling, water exercises, swimming, group fitness classes, gardening, and dancing. Muscle strengthening such as lifting weights, resistant bands and yoga that improves stamina and strength. Flexibility exercise is important for people with arthritis and stretching regularly to increase flexibility and improve your ability to do everyday tasks. Balance is important to prevent falls and improve balance, exercises such as tai chi.

You can change your activity level to fit the level of your arthritis symptoms to participate in joint friendly activities. You should begin slowly and increase the amount of exercise that your body is comfortable with. Be aware of what your body can tolerate, but don't make excuses to skip physical activity since it can reduce symptoms and improve your quality of life.

If you are beginning to exercise, start out slowly. Have clothing that is appropriate for the activity. Wear good safe shoes. It is important to realize that exercise is safe for people with arthritis and for disease prevention. Just make sure to exercise safely, know your limits and consult your doctor before beginning a new exercise routine.

Source: Rutgers Cooperative Extension, Center for Disease Control and Prevention.