

STAYING ACTIVE



Everything we do and every movement we make involves our joints. When arthritis makes our joints painful, stiff and swollen, our lives can grind to a halt. Taking care of our joints and getting them moving properly is the number one priority of any arthritis treatment plan.

PAIN CAN STOP US IN OUR TRACKS

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- FURTHER RESOURCES

PAIN CAN STOP US IN OUR TRACKS

When it hurts to move, it may seem like a good idea to stop moving to protect our joints from the pain. Unfortunately, research suggests quite the opposite. The less we move our joints, the stiffer and more painful they become, and the muscles that protect and surround them become weaker, making us more prone to injury. It can turn into a vicious cycle.

HURT DOES NOT NECESSARILY EQUAL HARM

It is important to understand that hurt does not always equal harm. Chronic pain does not necessarily indicate ongoing damage. We used to believe that chronic pain was due to an injury that had not **healed. New research shows that this isn't the case for most people, and that disease activity and tissue damage are actually a poor predictor of people's pain levels.**

Source: [RB Fillingim et al. Genetic contributions to pain: a review of findings in humans, 2008](#)

“The effects of my arthritis, i.e. **inflammation, pain, fatigue, are lessened when I get some form of physical exercise each day.** This could be household chores, physical labour, or an exercise routine. Keeping active and taking **anti-inflammatory medicine consistently seems to be the best way for me to keep the effects of my condition at a minimum.**”

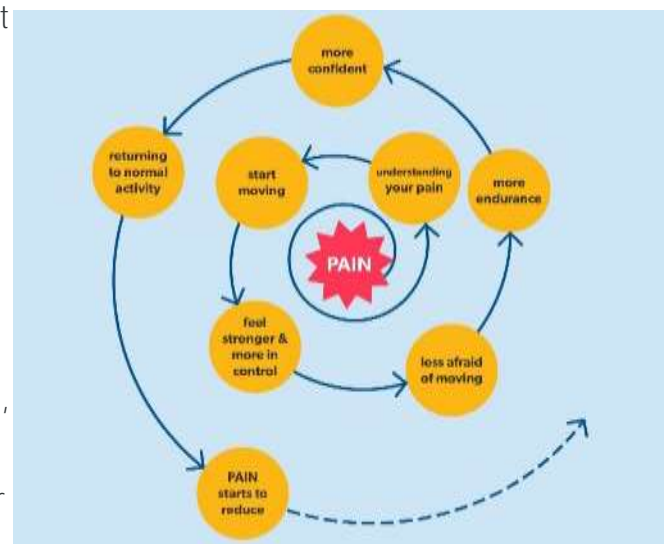
- **Scott, living with inflammatory arthritis and working full time**

HOW DO WE STOP THE CYCLE?

Your healthcare team will be able to help you distinguish what kinds of pain you should watch out for and what kinds of movement are best for you. They will advise you to take it slowly and monitor your progress.

Once you understand the causes of your pain and what kinds **of movement are beneficial, start moving. This will start reversing the vicious cycle.** Research shows that doing this will increase your sense of control and make you feel stronger, which can make you less afraid of moving, allowing you to increase your endurance and the amount and intensity of your physical activities. That, in turn, can make you feel more **confident, more able to return to your normal activities, and reduce your pain.**

Source: [Understanding Persistent Pain. Department of Health & Human Services, Tasmania.](#)



JOINT PAIN AND ARTHRITIS



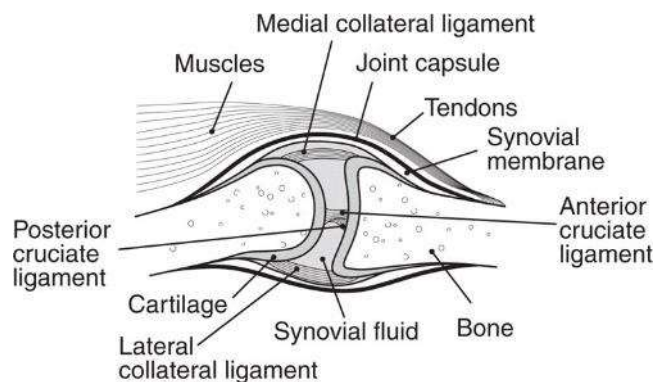
A joint is where two or more bones are joined together. They **make us flexible and without them we wouldn't be** able to move. Joints can be rigid, such as the joints between the bones in your skull, or moveable, such as knees, hips and shoulders.

Many joints have cartilage on the ends of the bones where they come together. Healthy cartilage helps you move by allowing bones to glide over one another. It also protects bones by preventing them from **rubbing against each other**. **Synovial fluid lubricates the joints**.

Strong muscles are important to keep your joints in good shape. If the muscles get weak around your knee, for example, you may cause more wear and tear on the joints and be more likely to injure that knee.

Source: [National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases – Healthy Muscles Matter](#)

Normal Joint



Source: [National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Disease](#)

JOINT PAIN AND ARTHRITIS

The term arthritis means inflammation of the joint and is used to refer to many disorders that affect the joints. The word means inflammation of the joint. Inflammation is a medical term to describe pain, redness and swelling. There are over 100 different types of arthritis; some are caused by joint **inflammation and others by joint degeneration**.

Source: [National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases](#)

The two main forms of arthritis are osteoarthritis and inflammatory arthritis, both of which can be the source of joint pain.

Joints Affected by Osteoarthritis and Inflammatory Arthritis



Source: [National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Disease](#)

WHY DO ARTHRITIC JOINTS HURT?

There are many reasons why your joints may ache and hurt, but below are the six most common sources.

Inflammation inside the joints

Inflammation irritates the nerve endings and causes pain.

Worn or damaged cartilage

There are no nerve endings in cartilage, but if it is worn down, the bone underneath may also begin to wear, come into contact with other bones, or even change shape. Bones do contain nerves, so this can be very painful.

Putting extra pressure on your joints

Not surprisingly, carrying heavy items can increase the pain in your hands, arms and shoulders, and you may also feel the effects in other joints. In the same way, the heavier our bodies are, the more pressure we put on our joints.

Extra activity

Doing much more than our body is used to can cause you pain. That's why it's important to pace yourself and start any change in your physical activities slowly so they are sustainable. Arthritis can reduce your muscle stamina so you can tire quickly.

Inflammation in the structures around your joint

- in a bursa, which normally allows your muscles and tendons to run smoothly over your joints. This often happens in your shoulder and hip joints
- in the ligaments that hold your joints together. This frequently happens around your knee joint.

Referred pain

Sometimes you may feel pain in one part of your body when the problem is somewhere else. An example of this is sciatica, where a nerve in your back is injured but you often feel the pain in your leg. Arthritis in the hip may cause you to feel pain in the groin, or even the knee.

Source: [Arthritis Research UK](http://ArthritisResearchUK)

WHEN SHOULD YOU SEE YOUR DOCTOR ABOUT JOINT PAIN?



It's common to have aches and pains in your muscles and joints after new or intense physical activity. If you've overdone it, the pain usually lessens after a few days. Some aches and pains, however, are not normal.

There are many forms of inflammatory arthritis, nevertheless there are warning signs that are typical for most, including:

- Pain, swelling and stiffness in one or multiple joints
- Pain and stiffness that worsens with inactivity and improves with physical activity
- Reduced joint range of motion
- Sometimes fever, weight loss, fatigue and/or anemia

Osteoarthritis (OA), the most common type of arthritis, used to be described as a **degenerative** or “**wear-and-tear**” arthritis. **The warning signs associated with OA are:**

- Joint grinding
- Morning stiffness or stiffness after a period of inactivity, usually lasting less than 30 minutes
- Very early symptoms of osteoarthritis are intermittent pain with strenuous activity; over time, the pain is present more often

If you are experiencing some of the above symptoms, try our Arthritis Symptom Checker at <https://arthritis.ca/about-arthritis/signs-of-arthritis/symptom-checker/>. This tool is designed as a resource to help you communicate more effectively with your doctor about symptoms you may be experiencing. Simply answer the questions based on your symptoms, then print out the results and take them to your next appointment with your doctor.



BENEFITS OF INCREASING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



Now that we understand how joints work and what makes them hurt, let's explore the ways that you can actively protect your joints and get your body working for you.

BENEFITS OF INCREASING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Did you know you're "feeding" your joints when you're active? Cartilage depends on the circulation caused by joint movement to stay hydrated, absorb nutrients and remove waste. Cartilage, ligaments, muscles and bone become stronger and more resilient with regular exercise. Physical activity and exercise actually help keep joints healthy and reduce pain.

Benefits of regular activity and exercise include:

- Decreased pain
- Increased muscle strength and endurance
- Increased bone strength
- Improved balance Decreased risk of falls Increased self-**confidence**
- Healthier body weight, which means less stress on joints Improved ability to manage emotional stress
- Healthier joints
- Increased joint range of motion, less stiffness
- Increased ability to perform daily activities
- **Increased fitness level**
- Less fatigue Improved sleep
- Improved mood
- Decreased risk of other chronic diseases including heart disease and stroke, lung disease, circulatory problems, type-2 diabetes, high blood pressure and osteoporosis.

WHAT COUNTS AS PHYSICAL ACTIVITY?



Physical activity includes a whole range of household, workplace and lifestyle activities that can help you increase your strength, your **energy and your flexibility**. **Physical activity can include exercise, such as swimming or going to the gym, but it also includes day-to-day activities such as gardening, walking, and housework.**

The reason we make this distinction is that many people are intimidated by the idea of exercise, like going to a yoga class or a gym. Exercise is only one way to be physically active. Increasing the amount of movement in your day can take the form of many little things, such as:

- Parking farther away from the mall entrance so you walk a little further
- Dancing around to the radio while you cook
- **Taking frequent “stretch” breaks at work to walk**
- **Standing while taking a call, or walking to a colleague’s work area instead of emailing**
- Walking to the convenience store instead of driving
- **Choosing stairs instead of the elevator (if your knees aren’t bothering you)**
- Getting off one stop early if you take public transit
- Getting in the garden to dig, prune, rake and weed

GETTING STARTED

Check with your healthcare team

When you have arthritis or persistent joint pain, always consult with your healthcare team before starting any new physical activity or exercise routine. Consulting a physiotherapist who is familiar with arthritis is a great investment, as they can guide you towards what kinds of movements will be easiest on your problem joints and strengthen the surrounding muscles to protect them.



Start slowly and pace yourself

Increase your activity level gradually and monitor your progress. Going too far, too fast, could cause discouraging setbacks. Pacing is the key to your success. On days when you feel better, be more **active, but be realistic and don't overdo it. A good rule of thumb is if your arthritis pain is worse two hours after physical activity, you have probably done too much.**

Find something you enjoy

Some people like going to the gym. But don't buy a gym membership if you dread the idea of going. Figure out what you enjoy and do that — you'll be much more likely to stick to your plan.

Consider an exercise partner

Making a commitment with a friend or co-worker will give you the extra push you need on days when your motivation is low.

Warm up and cool down

"Warm up" isn't just a figure of speech — cold muscles are stiffer and more prone to injury. Consider a hot shower or a heating pad to limber up. If your joints are inflamed, don't use heat; icing can help, but make sure you wait at least 15 minutes after icing to begin exercising. After exercise, an ice pack can ease any inflammation or irritation.

During a flare-up

When your **joints are particularly inflamed it's important to rest** more and protect painful, swollen or inflamed joints. **Don't stop moving altogether, instead, focus on range of motion exercises and gentle stretches.**

“If you are trying something new (be it exercise or something you’ve always wanted to explore) always remember to “start low and go slow”. This way you can gradually build your tolerance while ensuring that you don’t experience the pain, frustration, additional fatigue and/or discouragement that can occur when you overdo it.”

Kelly, Occupational Therapist with extensive experience in arthritis management

THREE TYPES OF EXERCISE



There are three major types of physical activities/exercise, all of which are **important to general fitness. These include activities for flexibility, for strength and for endurance.** Some individuals may want to emphasize one type over another, but your program should have elements of each. Research shows that people with arthritis can perform not only gentle stretching and strengthening exercises, but also more **robust endurance activities without any significant risk of harm.** A physiotherapist or other healthcare or exercise professional can be useful in helping to determine your needs.

Regardless of your level of ability, you'll benefit from choosing from a variety of activities that develop different skills and keep your activity habits interesting.

- **Flexibility** – these activities include range-of-motion exercises and stretches, which improve how you are able to move your joints and help increase the length and elasticity of your muscles.
- **Strength** – these activities help to increase the muscle's ability to provide support and stability to a joint.
- **Endurance** – these activities improve the health of your heart, lungs and circulatory system and increase your stamina. Anything that gets your heartbeat up and your lungs working over a period of time counts as endurance exercise.

FLEXIBILITY EXERCISES

Range of Motion (ROM)

The “range of motion” of any joint refers to how far, and in what ways, you can move it in a normal way. Exercises to increase range of motion are distinct from stretching. This type of exercise should be done **even when you are experiencing a flare-up** in your arthritis, as it helps to maintain range of motion and circulation. **During a flare-up you may need to limit the range of motion exercises for the inflamed joint**, but you should still do them to maintain movement and help circulation.

Every joint in your body should be taken through its complete range of motion at least once daily. Build them into your morning routine to reduce stiffness.

Tips:

- Start at the top of your head and work your way down your body – anything that moves – your neck, your shoulders, your elbows etc. – should be gently moved in all the ways that it normally moves. **That means, for example, that your wrists should be flexed back and forth and rotated, then moved to the left and right as if your fist was shaking its head “no”.**
- Listen to your body. If your joints are painful, your range of motion will be limited, but you should **still move within your limits every day. During a flare-up you may need to reduce the range of motion for the inflamed joint, but you should still the exercises to maintain movement and help circulation.**
- Flexibility activities are best done daily in a non-weight-bearing position, such as lying down or sitting on your bed or couch.
- **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 for no more than three seconds.**

Stretching

Stretching exercises help maintain or restore normal flexibility to the joint's muscles and tendons.

Perform stretches slowly and hold them for 20 to 30 seconds. Stretch receptors in the muscles relax, **which in turn allows sustained lengthening of muscle fibres. Tight and shortened muscles are major contributors to arthritis pain.**

Tips for stretching exercises:

- Be gentle. Stretching too hard too fast will only strain your muscles, not lengthen them. Be sure to **relax the muscle you are stretching since a tensed muscle won't stretch.**
- Stretches can be repeated two to three times, while being held for 10 to 30 seconds each.
- **Stretching shouldn't be painful.**
- Stretches are best done when the muscles are warm, such as after a walk or shower.
- Stretches should be a smooth movement; avoid bouncing or jerking.
- Keep breathing!
- If a joint is hot, **swollen, painful or in a flare-up**, avoid stretches for that day.

Here are some examples of range of motion and stretching exercises:

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.



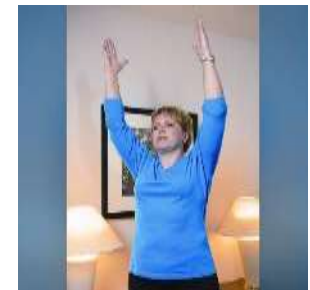
Shoulder circles

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.



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 side



Finger tuck

Hold one or both hands pointing up 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 if performing this exercise one hand at a time.



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 coax your knee higher with your hands or with a strap. Keeping your abdominals tight, slowly lower your leg back to the starting position.



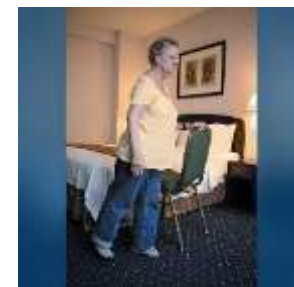
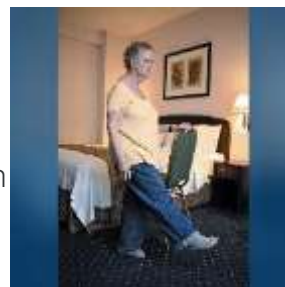
Elbow bend

With your arms hanging loosely at your sides, bend your elbows, bringing your hands up so your fingers touch your shoulders. Then slowly lower your arms back to your side.



Hip swing

Stand behind and slightly to the left of a sturdy, straight-backed chair. With knees slightly bent and left hand on the chair for support, slowly swing your right 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 left leg.



Ankle circles

Sitting properly in a straight-backed 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.



STRENGTHENING EXERCISES



Strengthening exercises increase the muscle's ability to provide support and stability to a joint. Not only do they increase muscle strength and control but they also increase bone strength (i.e. help prevent osteoporosis) and help to reduce the risk of injury.

There are two types of strengthening exercises that are commonly prescribed for people with arthritis: isometric and isotonic. Isometric strength exercises involve strongly tightening your muscles without moving painful joints. Isotonic strength exercises use resistance to the joint as you put it through its range of motion. For your trunk and legs, gravity alone may be enough resistance, especially if you are not exercising already. When working your arms and upper body you may want to use a stretchy exercise band or light weights, even a full bottle of water or a can of food can provide enough resistance.

Tips for strengthening exercises:

- Work the muscle until it is tired but not shaky. Once your muscles are tired, you are likely to stop using the targeted muscle properly and strain something else.
- **Do not overwork damaged or inflamed joints.**
- Progress slowly. Pick a weight or resistance that allows you to do 10 repetitions continuously at a slow to moderate pace. As your strength improves and this becomes easy, you can progress to heavier weights or stronger resistance.
- 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 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.**
- **Watch your form and joint positioning during exercises. If you can't do the exercise properly,** stop. Consult an expert; they will ensure you have the proper form and technique, preventing the chances of injury or misalignment.
- Keep breathing.

- Strengthening exercises should not result in an increase in your arthritis pain that lasts more than 2 hours after exercise.
- Leave a day between your strengthening exercises so your muscles have a chance to recover.
- When doing isometric exercises, tense your muscle with no more than 60 per cent of your maximum effort. This will help to keep the pressure inside your joint low, and reduce the risk of increasing your blood pressure.

Here are some isometric exercises to try:

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.**



Here are some isotonic exercises to try:

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 three seconds 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 slow count of three and relax. Repeat 10 times before changing sides.



ENDURANCE EXERCISES



This type of activity involves the use of the large muscle groups in rhythmical and repetitive movements. Endurance (or aerobic) exercise raises your heart rate, makes you breathe faster, and makes you work harder than you normally do during most of the day. Just about any activity that uses your whole body can be considered an endurance exercise. For some, a ten-minute moderately brisk walk can be an endurance activity, while others will need more vigorous activity to achieve the endurance response.

Choose exercises that are low-impact – anything that jars your joints like jogging may cause more pain, not less.

Tips for endurance exercises:

- Set realistic goals and progress slowly but steadily.
- Start with short periods and gradually increase time spent with a raised heart rate.
- Keep breathing (or talking or singing) while exercising to ensure you are not over-extending.
- Stop if you have shortness of breath, or any chest or arm pain and consult your physician immediately.
- Endurance exercises should be done 3-5 times per week.
- Endurance exercises can include **water fitness, swimming, walking, dancing, cycling, mowing the lawn, raking leaves** etc.

CHOOSING ARTHRITIS-FRIENDLY ACTIVITIES



Choose low- and no-**impact exercises that won't cause further wear to your already painful joints.** Consider cycling, swimming, even in-line skating, and other activities during **which you're not coming down hard on your feet (like running) or pivoting and twisting joints (like basketball).** This is important because knees absorb the greatest force of the impact.

As your joints become stronger, your treatment team will be able to decide when to start including walking and stair-**climbing. Don't forget to listen to your body. It will tell you when you're pushing your own limits too far.**

Source: [Canadian Orthopaedic Foundation. https://whenithurtstomove.org/stay-healthy/keeping-active/](https://whenithurtstomove.org/stay-healthy/keeping-active/)

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 healthcare professional that this is an appropriate activity for you.**

Water Exercise

Water activities are helpful for people with pain because they are gentle, low impact activities that are easy on muscles, joints and bones. Water provides resistance, about 12 to 14 per cent more than on land. This resistance strengthens you, and also prevents you from making sudden movements, which prevents jarring your joints. You can start a water exercise routine by walking waist-deep in the pool, or **by practicing floating on your back. Once you are comfortable in the water, you can try swimming laps.**

You don't have to be good at swimming to get the benefits. You can use a flotation device, hold the wall, or stay in the shallow end.

You can also take swimming lessons or water aerobics/aqua-**fit classes at a community centre. Some are designed specifically for people with back pain, arthritis or fibromyalgia.**

“Come rain or snow, I’m always glad that I made the effort to attend aqua-fit class. I may be tired when I enter the pool, but the exercise, fun and camaraderie of my classmates re-energizes me.”

Ann, living with arthritis

Yoga

Like other forms of physical activity, yoga can cause the release of your body’s own painkillers called endorphins. Yoga typically combines physical postures, breathing techniques, and meditation or **relaxation. Yoga can strengthen your muscles, increase flexibility, reduce muscle tension and help you to** relax. There are many types of yoga. Some can be very strenuous and not appropriate for bodies with joint damage. Look for a Restorative, Hatha, or Yin yoga class, or one designed for people with chronic pain or arthritis, or for seniors.

Tai Chi

Tai Chi is sometimes referred to as “moving meditation” because practitioners move their bodies slowly, gently and with awareness, all while breathing deeply. Tai Chi may be an option for managing chronic pain and can improve your general health and peace of mind. Some more advanced Tai Chi poses may not be suitable, but most instructors will be able to guide you as to what is appropriate for your level.

Cycling

As long as **you stick to routes that aren’t too bumpy, cycling can be a great low-**impact form of exercise. It can be fun and practical too — **biking to do a local errand can help you fit in physical activity while still** getting your chores done.

Cycling, whether done outdoors or on a stationary bicycle, strengthens muscles and is also a good cardiovascular workout for your heart and lungs. Adjust your seat height 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.

SMARTER GOALS



Goal setting helps you gain some control. A goal is something you would like to achieve. Maybe your goal is to become more physically active. But what does that mean in practical terms? How will you achieve it? How will **you know you're** succeeding?

SMARTER Goal Setting

Experts recommend an activity called SMARTER goal setting, which helps you to take a broad goal and **break it into smaller, achievable steps**. Each letter in the word “SMARTER” stands for part of your goal planning.

S (Specific)

Focus on what you want to accomplish. How will you know when you have met your goal? Be precise **about what you want to do**. **If you have a broad goal, break it down into smaller steps**. **You'll keep on track and experience success more quickly**.

Example: The Canada Physical Activity Guidelines recommend that adults do at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity each week. That may be your overall goal, but if you are currently having a lot **of flare-ups** and you are mostly sedentary, going straight to 150 minutes will probably be counterproductive — you might strain yourself and have to stop, which is discouraging. Decide that you want to increase your activity gradually over six months until you are regularly doing 60 minutes of physical activity each week.

M (Measurable)

The goal you set should be measurable in concrete terms. How will you achieve what you want? How will you measure it?

Example: To get to your goal of 60 minutes of physical activity, you plan to increase your amount of physical activity gradually. You plan to start by walking for 15 minutes, two times a week. After two **months, you hope to increase the amount of time spent walking by five minutes, so in month three you're doing 40 minutes**. In month five, the plan is to increase to three days a week for 20 minutes each.

A (Attainable)

The goal should be possible given the state of your health and your current activity level. Think about your physical situation and potential problems before you set a goal. Problem-solve potential challenges.

Example: **You know that you're quite busy and tired after work, so you decide to walk on your lunch breaks. This fits into your busy schedule. Walking is a low-impact activity that your body can handle well.** You decide to keep a pair of running shoes at work, and ask a colleague to join you sometimes to make it more enjoyable and keep each other on track.

R (Relevant)

Your goals should matter to you. Don't let someone else pick your goal. Don't compare your goals with others. Everyone's situation is unique.

Example: **It doesn't matter that your brother runs marathons or that your neighbour** thinks you should join her gym. Walking is an activity you enjoy and will actually do.

T (Time-limited)

Set a date to achieve your goal. Without a date set, you might be tempted to drag the goal process on.

Example: Your 60-minute goal is set to be accomplished in six months.

E (Evaluate)

Making your progress measurable means that you can evaluate how it's going and make changes to your plans if necessary.

Example: You decide to mark on your desk calendar the number of minutes you actually walk per day. **After a few weeks, you may find that you often end up walking longer than 15 minutes, so you decide to increase your goal to 20 minutes earlier than expected.** A few months in, you might realize that the winter cold makes it too unpleasant to walk your normal route, so you choose another activity you can do instead on cold days.

R (Reward)

Have a reward for yourself planned when you achieve your goal. You want to mark the occasion since you have spent time, energy and determination to reach your goal. Be sure to take time to celebrate your success.

Example: **Every week that you achieve your target you buy yourself a small treat like flowers or a night at the movies.** Plan a weekend trip for when you achieve your six-month goal.

Summary

Don't forget to tell your healthcare team about your goal. Also share your goal with people who care about you. Tell supportive family and friends about what you're trying to achieve so they can lend their support, which increases your commitment and motivation.

Source: [Arthritis Self Management – Setting Goals for Pain Management](https://www.painfreelivinglife.com/pain-conditions/arthritis/setting-goals-for-pain-management/) <https://www.painfreelivinglife.com/pain-conditions/arthritis/setting-goals-for-pain-management/>

OVERCOMING BARRIERS



Increasing your level of physical activity can be difficult and you may face challenges like pain, fatigue and lack of motivation. Here are some common issues individuals face, and some advice on how 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 hot or cold treatments when appropriate can neutralize the pain and allow you to get the exercise your body needs. If you have osteoarthritis, apply heat 20 minutes **prior to exercising**. If you have an inflammatory type of arthritis, apply ice to your affected joints for 15 to 20 minutes well before starting your activity.

“I’m tired.”

Fatigue is a common symptom of arthritis, but it’s also increased by inactivity. Being active will actually improve 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 18 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, give consideration to the 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 benefits of physical activity is that it can be inexpensive. It costs you nothing to walk around inside a mall. **If you don’t want to buy weights, use cans of food, bottles of water or resistance bands. To find out about other innovative ways of working out,** search reputable websites or get exercise videos and DVDs from your local library.

“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. To stay interested, change-up your activity by listening to music, watching television or asking a friend to join you, and keep moving!

“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 become stronger, your balance will improve and **you’ll be able to gradually increase the number of activities you can complete standing, without support.**

“After a long, tiring day at my job, I usually just want to collapse and get a good nap. But doing some work around the house, or visiting with friends, gives me my second wind and I have more energy to do the things that I like doing. It always amazes me how much staying active and enjoying my activities can help me forget about my pain and fatigue and allow me to do the things that mean the most to me.”

Mike, employed full time, living with RA and an active volunteer

NO TIME? TEN EXERCISES YOU CAN DO ALMOST ANYWHERE

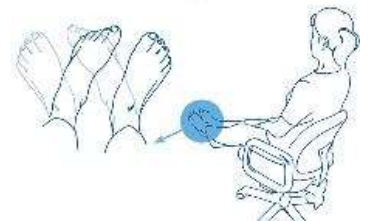


These exercises are especially good if you sit at work for long periods **of time. For most of them you don't even have to leave your chair.** Once you know them, you can do many of them almost anywhere – on transit, while watching TV or waiting in line.

TOP TEN EXERCISES YOU CAN DO AT WORK

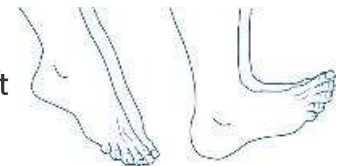
1. Ankle circles

Sit upright in a chair with feet stretched out in front. Rotate feet in one direction. Repeat in opposite direction.



2. Heel/toe lift

Sit forward on a chair with feet flat. Lift heels, keeping toes on the floor, then lift toes. Hold for three seconds then return feet to flat position.



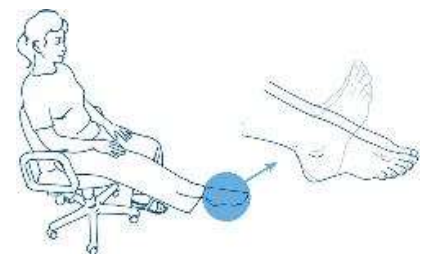
3. Knee raises

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 help get your knee higher with your hands if necessary. Keeping your abdominal muscles tight, slowly lower your leg back to the starting position. Anyone who has just had total hip replacement should wait three months before attempting this exercise.



4. Leg lift with ankle movements

Sit upright with your back supported. Slowly straighten your knee. With the knee slightly bent, bend your ankle to point the toes straight ahead. Then reverse to point your toes toward the ceiling. Repeat.



5. Shoulder stretches

Sit or stand with forearms pressed together in front of your body.

Then, bring your elbows back to the “hands up” position, with palms facing forward. Finally, stretch arms overhead as far as possible, keeping your elbows in line with the side of your body.



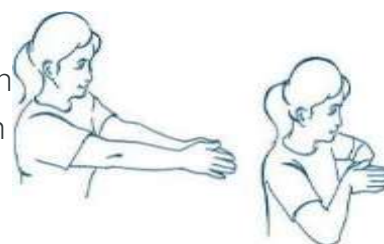
6. Forward arm reaches

Sit or stand with arms at your side, elbows bent and thumbs pointed back toward your shoulders. Stretch arms overhead. If one of your arms is weak, you can help it by placing your hand under the elbow and assisting the arm to the overhead position. Finally, lower arms slowly to the start position.



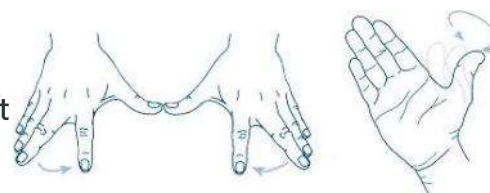
7. Shoulder squeeze and wrist stretch

Put your palms and fingers together. Hold your arms stretched out together in front. Pull your hands in toward your chest, making your elbows bend to each side. Press palms together as you move them closer to your body and squeeze shoulder blades together.



8. Finger walk and thumb circles

Sit with **your hands on a table or desk, fingers pointing ahead.** Slide **your thumbs toward each other.** Then slide each finger one at a time toward the thumb. After the little finger has completed the “walk”, lift your hands and put them down straight. Then, move your fingers toward the thumb.



9. Hip and calf stretch

Stand with arms supporting you against a wall. Place one foot in front of the other and keep your feet apart (shoulder-width) and pointing forward. Keep your shoulder, hip, knee and ankle in a straight line. Keep shoulder and hips square and tighten your abdominal muscles. Move forward, bending only at the ankles and keeping weight on the heel of your back foot.



10. Walking

Take a walk every day. Walking allows you to stretch your back and leg muscles, as well as other joints that can become stiff from sitting.

FURTHER RESOURCES

Getting started is the first step to a healthier life. Want to learn more? Visit these resources for more information and to keep you motivated and on track.

[Canada's Physical Activity Guide - National Physical Activity Plan](http://www.physicalactivityplan.org/resources/CPAG.pdf)
<http://www.physicalactivityplan.org/resources/CPAG.pdf>

[Government of Canada Get Active Tip Sheets](https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/being-active.html)
<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/being-active.html>

The Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology (CSEP) has developed the [Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines](https://csepguidelines.ca), which reflect the latest research into how much and what kinds of movement we need to be healthy. <https://csepguidelines.ca>

STAY IN TOUCH



Thank you for taking a few minutes to [complete our survey at surveyMonkey.com/courseseval](https://surveyMonkey.com/courseseval). Your feedback will guide the ongoing improvement of our programs to help you and other Canadians better manage your arthritis.

[Sign up to the flourish e-newsletter](#) to receive health and wellness advice, self management tips, inspirational stories and much more to help you move through life with arthritis.

