



DAILY LIVING

Arthritis can impact every aspect of your life, but with some adjustments, you can keep doing both the things you need to do *and* the things you love to do.

PUT YOUR BEST FOOT FORWARD - CHOOSING FOOTWEAR

SMOKING AND ARTHRITIS

TOOLS, DEVICES AND LIFE HACKS

SPLINTS AND BRACES

DRIVING TIPS

SITTING, STANDING AND LIFTING

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PUT YOUR BEST FOOT FORWARD - CHOOSING FOOTWEAR



Human feet have 52 bones, 66 joints and more than 200 muscles, tendons and ligaments, all so the feet can support our skeleton and provide balance and mobility.

Our feet can only be as comfortable as our **footwear permits, but it's not just feet that suffer from poor shoes.** Back, hip, knee and ankle pain are greatly affected by the kind of shoes we wear.

Here are a few things to keep in mind when looking for footwear that will keep you comfortable and stylish.

1. **Choose shoes that provide a firm grip for your heel.** If the back of the shoe is too wide or too soft, your foot will slip, causing **instability and soreness.** Check the fit by sliding your finger around the back or side of the heel to **make sure that you're not slipping** out when you step.



2. **Don't wear shoes that change the shape of your foot.** Your toes should have plenty of room to wiggle. Shoes that have a pointed, narrow or shallow shape can create pressure, cause pain and eventual damage to your foot.



3. Arch support is important in any shoe, whether formal or casual. Look for shoes with great arch support, or that can be worn with orthotic supports. Lack of arch **support can cause your foot to flatten and can affect knee, hip and back pain.**



4. Look for shoes that lace up, whenever possible. Lace-up shoes allow **for the most customizable fit for your foot which can also help prevent falls.** If you have tenderness in the bones on the top of your foot, choose a shoe with a padded tongue, or cushioning at the ball of the toes for pain in the bones on the bottom. Also, if you spend a lot of **time on hard floors including cement floors and pavement, choose footwear with a shock-absorbing cushioning, supportive sole — let the shoe do the work, not your feet!** For more information on footwear selection, visit the Pedorthic Association of Canada's [website](https://www.pedorthic.ca/footwear/footwear-selection/).
<https://www.pedorthic.ca/footwear/footwear-selection/>



5. High heels, while fashionable, put your knees at risk. A University of Iowa study measured how different shoes impacted force on the knee joint and found that the height of heels changed the study **participants' stride. As the heel height increased, they also saw an increase in compression on the medial, or inside, of the knee — possibly putting people who wear heels at risk for knee osteoarthritis.** The higher the heel, the worse the pressure. Saving high heels for special occasions and choosing lower and wider heels for every day is a smarter choice.



Invest in your feet...

Considering talking to a footwear specialist, physiotherapist, pedorthist, chiropodist or podiatrist to make sure your feet are getting the support they need. Your whole body will thank you.

Sources:

Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety:

http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/ergonomics/standing/standing_basic.html#_1_10

The Arthritis Foundation - **Can Lifestyle Factors Influence Osteoarthritis Outcomes?**:

<http://blog.arthritis.org/osteoarthritis/lifestyle-factors-cause-osteoarthritis/#more-14>

The Arthritis Foundation - Find the Best and Worst Shoes for Arthritis: <http://blog.arthritis.org/living-with-arthritis/shoes-for-arthritis/>

SMOKING AND ARTHRITIS



If you are a smoker, talk to your doctor about the many programs, treatments and devices available to help you quit or to decrease the amount you smoke on your way **to quitting. Most people aren't aware that smoking also** has a negative effect on your bones and joints.

According to the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons:

- Studies have shown that smoking reduces the blood supply to bones, just as it does to many other areas of the body.
- Smoking decreases the absorption of calcium from your diet. Calcium is necessary for bone mineralization, and with less bone mineral, smokers develop fragile bones (osteoporosis).
- Smokers are 1.5 times more likely to suffer overuse injuries, such as bursitis or tendonitis, than non-smokers.
- Smokers are more likely to suffer traumatic injuries, such as sprains or fractures.
- Smoking is also associated with a higher risk of low back pain and rheumatoid arthritis.
- Smoking has a detrimental effect on fracture and wound healing.

Taking the first step towards quitting by talking to your healthcare professional can help put you on the **path to improved bone and joint health, not to mention the many other benefits that come with** quitting smoking.

Reference: [The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons - Ortho Info - Smoking and Musculoskeletal Health:](http://orthoinfo.aaos.org/topic.cfm?topic=a00192)
<http://orthoinfo.aaos.org/topic.cfm?topic=a00192>

TOOLS, DEVICES AND LIFE HACKS



If you are having difficulty with a certain task because of joint pain, or if you want to protect your joints while performing a task, chances are someone has come up with an idea or device to make it easier. Let's explore some of your options to decrease stress on joints and reduce the amount of energy it takes to do things.

Here we'll only scratch the surface, but seeking out other reliable sources on the web will put countless ideas, devices and strategies at your fingertips. An online search using terms like "arthritis making bed" will give you lots of ideas to try. Experiment — carefully — and find what works for you.

You don't necessarily have to spend any money. For example, looping a scarf or belt through a handle allows you to open a heavy filing cabinet drawer or fridge door with your arm instead of your hand.

When performing any task, try to find ways to use larger joints to protect smaller, more fragile joints. Your large joints are supported by bigger, stronger muscles and can handle more strain.

LIGHTEN YOUR LOAD

Joint pain in your hands can limit your range of movement, which makes it difficult to grip things. Learn to hold things with no more force than is necessary. To assist in this, look for tools which enlarge the gripping surface so that joints don't have to bend as much and the strain is distributed more widely. Devices made from textured, non-slippery materials eliminate the need to grip so tightly. Wheels and levers reduce the amount of force necessary as well.



1. Bags

It is easier on your body to carry a bag with an across-the-shoulder strap (or a backpack) than to carry a handbag. A briefcase or laptop bag with a shoulder strap allows you to use your body instead of your hands to carry heavy items.





2. Foam Tubing

Foam tubing for small diameters and pipe insulation for larger diameters are available to slip over the tools you currently have to enlarge the handles.

3. Writing Tools

There are a variety of grips you can purchase for your pens. Some pens come with enlarged non-slip grips. The position of your joints will be bent less, easing the strain. Gel rollers or ink pens can be helpful because they flow more easily and you don't need to press as hard.



4. Knobs and Handles

Tiny knobs can be a problem when you have issues with your hands. Try putting an elastic band around a knob to make it larger and less slippery.

5. Door Knobs and Taps

Consider changing round door knobs or taps for lever- or bar-style ones or purchase a rubber or plastic gripper for ease of use.

6. Openers

Opening jars, cans and tabs can be a painful task. Here are some tools that can make it easier.



- A piece of non-slip plastic or rubber (like a piece from an exercise band) can help you open items. It's handy for turning doorknobs, gas tank caps or taps. Keep a piece in your bag or pocket.
- A jar key pops the vacuum seal reducing the amount of force needed to open the jar. Levers reduce the amount of force you need to use to do the job.
- Tab openers change the grip needed.

7. Zippers

A key ring **through a zipper tab lets you hook one finger through the ring instead of pinching the tab, making the task easier and reducing strain on your thumb and index finger.**



8. Anchoring Tools

Avoid gripping items tightly or holding your joints in one position for long periods of time. Tools that help you anchor items in place make the job a lot easier on your hands. Bowls with stands are useful, or a rubbery mat will help keep almost any tool in place with ease. A book rest or tablet stand also allows you to rest your hands.

9. Reaching Tools

Keep items at an accessible level to minimize bending and reaching. The use of long-handled devices can help.



10. Wheels

Many everyday items are available in styles that have wheels, which removes the need for lifting and carrying and reduces strain on your whole body. Suitcases, backpacks and briefcases with wheels reduce the impact of maneuvering luggage.

11. Hands-Free

Anything that reduces the time you have to grasp something will reduce strain. For example, use a speakerphone or headset for long phone calls.



Summary

No matter what you're trying to do, there's a tool out there to help you!

SPLINTS AND BRACES

Splints can help by:

- Supporting painful/damaged joints to increase stability and improve function
- Reducing strain/stress on painful or damaged joints
- Reducing your pain when performing tasks
- Providing a cue to you about how to use your joint more carefully
- Providing a cue to others to be careful around your painful joint



It's extremely important to use the correct kind of splint for what you are doing, as using the wrong one can actually cause more strain than no splint at all. Your healthcare professional can help you determine if a splint might be helpful and if so, what type would be best for you.

Resting vs Working

There are two main categories of splints — resting splints and working splints. A resting splint will support and rest the joint in the ideal position, reducing stress on ligaments, minimizing the pressure inside the joint, and preventing joint movement. Immobilizing the joints helps **to decrease inflammation. A resting splint is worn at night, or for rest periods during the day. You may find your joints are stiff in the morning** after wearing a resting splint but soaking them in warm water will help.



A working splint holds the joint in position, improving joint alignment and stability. This helps decrease stress on painful or damaged joints during activities. Working splints can help improve function and reduce pain.

It is a good idea to talk to a healthcare professional about your specific issues before purchasing splints.

Hand and Wrist Splints

There are splints that **support the wrist, wrist and thumb, thumb alone and/or the finger joints**. Below are examples of a resting wrist splint and a working wrist splint. Each one provides a different amount of support.

A resting splint



A working splint



Knee Braces

There are different styles of knee braces and the amount of support they offer varies. Some are soft wraps, while others have metal stays for added support in the case of damaged ligaments. If you feel **you might benefit from a knee brace, it is important** to consult with a healthcare professional to choose the one that is right for you.

Jointed Knee Support



Soft knee support



DRIVING TIPS



Sitting for long periods of time puts a strain on the body. Driving makes this worse by keeping you in a set **position from which you can't frequently shift your** posture. It also requires you to extend and exert your arms and legs, while subjecting you to both up-and-down motions from uneven driving surfaces and side-to-side movement while turning. Acceleration and deceleration also exert pressures on your body.

Source: Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety: <https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/ergonomics/driving.html>

"Some days my job involves a lot of driving and I do much better and feel better when I schedule a 5-minute break every 1.5 to 2 hours to stop, get out and walk and stretch."

- Bob, living with inflammatory arthritis

ADJUSTING YOUR CAR

Check your car manual to familiarize yourself with all the ways your car is adjustable. You might be **surprised by some of the features you haven't yet discovered.**

Steering wheel

Steering wheels can be adjusted for height or tilt for easy reach. The center of the steering wheel should be about 25- 30 cm (10-12 in) from your breastbone. The closer you are to the airbag, the higher the possibility of injury if the airbag deploys, even if you are wearing a seatbelt.

If your steering wheel can be tilted up and down, tilt it so the center of the steering wheel is pointing to your chest, not your head and neck or your stomach. This will position the airbag properly. Make sure your arms are also in a comfortable position — not too high or too low.

A padded steering wheel cover can make things easier on your hands.

Mirrors

Correctly position your mirrors to prevent you from having to twist around too much, while still enabling you to see the road properly.





Seatbelt

In some cars, the top attachment of your seatbelt can be raised or lowered. **Experiment to find a position that puts the least amount of pressure on any painful joints, like your shoulders.**

Seat height

Raise the seat as high as you can while still being comfortable. This will provide the best visibility through the windows. You should be able to see at least 76 mm (3 in) over the top of the steering wheel. **You don't want to be so low that you need to crane your neck, or so high that you have to hunch your shoulders.**



Seat cushion length

If possible, adjust the seat length so that the back of your knees are about 3-6 cm (1-1/4 to 2-3/8 in) from the front of the seat.

Seat forward/back

Move the seat forward until you can easily push the pedals through their full range with your whole foot, not just your toes. You may have to readjust the seat height for optimum control.





Seat cushion angle

If possible, tilt the seat cushion until your thighs are supported along the full length of the cushion without there being pressure at the back of your knees.

Experiment with the angle you find most comfortable. If you have lower back pain you might find it more comfortable if your knees are slightly lower than your hips, but too extreme an angle may cause you to clench muscles to keep from sliding forward.

Seat back

Adjust the backrest until it supports the full length of your back when you are sitting upright. If you are leaning too far back, you may end up bending your head and neck forward, which may cause muscle fatigue, neck or shoulder pain or tingling in the fingers.



Lumbar support

If possible, adjust the lumbar (lower back area) support up and down, and in and out, until you feel an even pressure along your back from the hips to shoulder height. The seat back should feel comfortable and there should be no gaps or pressure points in the back-support area. If necessary, keep a small cushion or rolled towel in the car for this purpose.

Headrest

Raise the headrest (head restraint) until the top of it is level with the top of your head. If the headrest can be tilted, adjust the angle until it is practically touching the back of your head when you are in a sitting position.

Source: Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety:
<http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/ergonomics/driving.html>



GETTING IN AND OUT OF YOUR VEHICLE

- If you have pain in your hips, getting in and out of a vehicle can be a problem because of the twisting and turning involved.
- The easiest approach is to back yourself into your car, sit down, then swing your legs into a forward-facing position. Do the reverse to get out.
- Use the interior handles on the door, or ceiling, to balance yourself and distribute pressure evenly, over more joints.
- If you are getting out of a high seat like a truck cab, avoid jumping, and if there is a running board, use it.

There are a number of aids you can use if getting in and out of a vehicle is a problem for you:

- Consider having swivel seats installed to make the process easier.
- A simple beaded seat cover can make long drives more comfortable and also make getting in and out of your car easier.
- If you have cloth seats, consider buying a vinyl seat covering to make sliding or swiveling your body easier.
- Running boards or step bars can be installed to make the step in or out of your car a more manageable distance.

MORE DRIVING TIPS

Gripping

If you have trouble gripping a steering wheel or gear shift, try using golf or weight-lifting gloves. They are designed to provide a non-slip grip. A steering wheel cover will also increase the size of the steering wheel making gripping easier.



Gas Cap Help

Keep a disk-shaped rubber jar opener in the car — you can use it to make twisting off the gas cap easier.

Car Keys

If you have trouble turning your car key, here are a number of strategies to try:

- Build up the key grip with duct or electrical tape.
- Trade in your keys for a keyless fob and starter that remotely unlocks your car and starts the engine.
- Purchase a ready-made key grip adapter like the one shown, which transfers the grip from your **finger tips to your whole hand.**

BUYING A NEW VEHICLE

If you are considering buying a new vehicle, you may want to look for these features:

- Automatic transmission
- Remote key starter
- Running boards and assist handles on sport utility vehicles and vans
- Adjustable steering wheel (up and down and telescoping)
- Fully adjustable seats (height, distance from pedals, tilt and lumbar support)
- Adjustable pedals
- Padded steering wheel
- Easy-to-grasp controls within easy reach
- Dashboard-mounted and push-button ignition switch
- Seatbelts that are easy to reach, lock and release
- Cruise control
- Easy-to-use door handles
- Easy-to-adjust mirrors and sun visors
- Easy-to-access trunk or rear door
- Shorter turning radius for ease in maneuvering

Source: The Arthritis Foundation: <http://blog.arthritis.org/living-with-arthritis/arthritis-friendly-car-shopping/>

SITTING, STANDING AND LIFTING



It's a common misconception that sitting is easy on the body. It's especially difficult if you have to do it for long periods. Good posture is key to staying on top of pain, but remember, staying in one position without breaks is taxing on your body, no matter how good your posture is, so keep moving.

Here are some tips to maintain good posture while you are sitting:

- **Chair:** Find a comfortable chair that supports your lower and mid back (with the backrest in the small of your back), as well as your thighs and buttocks. If the lumbar support is inadequate, use a small rolled towel.
- **Distance:** Make sure the chair is a comfortable distance from anything you will be doing, **whether you're using a computer, eating or writing.**
- **Positioning:** Sit upright with square shoulders. Your shoulders should be relaxed but not slumped. Hold your shoulders in the same position when **you're sitting as you would when you're standing.** Your hips and knees should be at 90-degree angles.
- **Height:** **Adjust the height of your chair if necessary so your feet are flat on the floor. If you can't lower your seat, use a footrest.** Your hips should be slightly higher than your knees.
- **Tilt:** In most circumstances, the chair seat should be level or slopping upwards at the front.
- **Armrests:** Check that your armrests are at the right height. If you have to hunch your shoulders then the armrests are too high, but **if your elbows don't reach, then they're too low. Some people find removing the armrests altogether makes them more comfortable.**
- **Reposition:** Change your body position often. Stand up or stretch if you have been sitting for a long time, or slightly adjust the tilt of your chair back for a while. If you need to, use a timer to remind yourself to switch positions.
- **Stretch and activate your joints:** When you move your body, you feed your joints. Cartilage depends on joint movement to absorb nutrients and remove waste. Cartilage, ligaments and bone also become stronger and more resilient with regular use. There are lots of simple stretches and exercises you can do even while remaining at your desk.

Read more about [finding the right chair for you.](https://www.versusarthritis.org/about-arthritis/living-with-arthritis/your-home/#Choosing-a-chair): <https://www.versusarthritis.org/about-arthritis/living-with-arthritis/your-home/#Choosing-a-chair>

USING A COMPUTER, PHONE OR TABLET

Whether you're watching a movie or surfing the web, many of us spend a lot of time using screens. Make sure your screen is set up properly to save you a lot of pain and fatigue.

Laptop

Laptops have notoriously bad ergonomics. If you position the keyboard to be in the right place, you'll strain your neck looking down at the screen, while the smaller size of the keyboard puts a strain on your wrists and shoulders. If you use a laptop more than occasionally, place it on a box or stacked blocks of printer paper to bring the screen up to eye level, and plug in a proper keyboard and mouse.

Tablets and Phones

Repetitive motion, plus poor posture, puts a lot of stress on joints, tendons, and muscles in your wrists, hands, arms, neck and back. So, change positions often and loosen your grip. Consider using an **adjustable stand or support so that you don't have to grip your** tablet or phone for prolonged periods. **Explore alternate keyboard layouts or apps to reduce the strain on your fingers when texting or writing** emails.

DESKTOP COMPUTERS

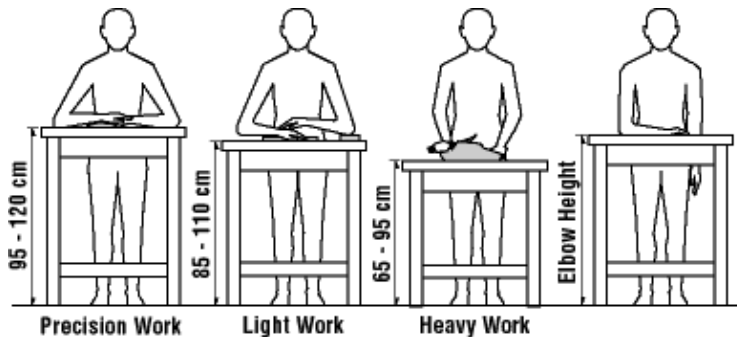
If you sit for a long time using your desktop computer, put these tips into practice to help reduce overall strain.

- Arms and wrists: Keep your wrists straight. Palm or wrist supports should only be used when resting, NOT when you are typing. Your elbows should be at a relaxed 90-degree angle to the keyboard, and your back should be straight.
- Mouse: Place the mouse as close as possible to the keyboard. If you have shoulder problems and use a keyboard with a number pad on the right, consider learning to mouse with your left hand. **You'll be reaching less and causing less** strain. Consider looking up keyboard shortcuts to reduce the number of clicks you need to make.
- Monitor: Position the top of the monitor approximately 2-3 inches above seated eye level (if you wear bifocals, lower the monitor to a comfortable reading level). Sit at least an arm's length away from the screen and then adjust the distance for your vision.

Source: [UCLA Ergonomics](https://ergonomics.ucla.edu/office-ergonomics/4-steps.html): <https://ergonomics.ucla.edu/office-ergonomics/4-steps.html>

STANDING

Long periods of standing are tiring for the body and can be hard on the joints, but sometimes this can't be avoided. If you're doing something in a standing position, such as cooking dinner, try to make adjustments so that the height of the counter or surface you're working on is laid out to reduce strain. Remember that different tasks require different work surface heights.



For example:

- Precision work, such as writing or electronic assembly, requires a work surface 5 cm above elbow height and elbow support is needed.
- Light work, such as assembly line or mechanical jobs, requires a work surface about 5-10 cm below elbow height.
- Heavy work, demanding downward forces, requires a work surface 20-40 cm below elbow height.

Reference: Adapted with permission from the [Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety](http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/ergonomics/standing/standing_basic.html):
http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/ergonomics/standing/standing_basic.html

In the Kitchen

Organize your kitchen workspace to allow easy and comfortable movements. Make sure that you have everything you need within reach before starting your task, and think about using a footrest to allow you to shift your body weight from one leg to another. If possible, try to sit. You can do food preparation sitting at the kitchen table instead of standing at the counter.

LIFTING

One of the biggest causes of back injury is lifting or handling objects incorrectly. Using the correct method for lifting and handling objects can help you to prevent back pain. Follow these tips to make lifting easier.

- **Think before you lift:** Plan out where the load is going to be placed and use appropriate handling devices where possible. Can the item be moved with a dolly or trolley? Can you slide the object instead of lifting it? Can you get help with the load? Remove obstructions, such as **discarded wrapping materials that might be in the way**. For long lifts, such as from floor to shoulder height, consider resting the load mid-way on a table or bench to allow you to change your grip on it.
- **Keep it close:** Keep the load close to the waist for as long as possible while lifting in order to keep your upper back straight. Keep the heaviest side of the load next to the body so that the load is supported by your leg muscles as opposed to your arms. If it is not possible to get close to the load, try to slide it towards you as much as possible before trying to lift it.
- **Stance:** Your feet should be apart with one leg slightly forward along the load if it's on the ground. This will help to keep your balance. Be prepared to move your feet during the lift to keep your posture stable. Try to avoid wearing overly tight clothing or unsuitable footwear such as **heels or flip-flops** when lifting heavy loads.
- **Get a grip:** Where possible, hug the load close to your body. This may be better than gripping it tightly with your hands.
- **Back straight:** **Don't bend your back when lifting. A slight bending of the back, hips and knees at the start of the lift is better than completely rounding the spine. Don't bend your back** any further while lifting, which can happen if your legs straighten before starting to raise the load.
- **Don't do the twist:** Avoid twisting your back or leaning sideways while lifting, especially while the back is bent. Keep your shoulders level and facing the same direction as the hips. Turn your body by moving your feet rather than twisting and lifting at the same time.
- **Heads up:** Look ahead, not down, at the load once you are holding it securely.
- **Be smooth:** **Don't jerk or snatch the load, as this can make it hard to keep control of the load** and can increase your risk of injury.
- **Know your limits:** **Don't lift or handle more than you can easily manage. There is a difference between what you can lift and what you can safely lift. If you're in doubt, get help.**
- **Adjust afterward:** **If you need to position the load precisely, put it down first, and then slide it** into place.

Source: National Health Service – Safe Lifting Tips: <http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/workplacehealth/Pages/safe-lifting-tips.aspx>

GETTING INTIMATE

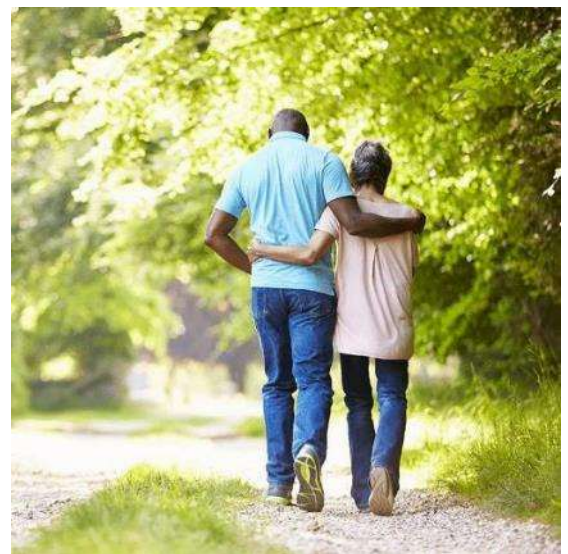


It's important to understand that arthritis does not cause a loss of sex drive. Sex itself will not worsen your arthritis. However, the physical and emotional hardships that result from arthritis can create barriers that undermine sexual needs, ability and satisfaction.

Intimacy and sexuality are vital ingredients to a healthy, satisfying life. A loving relationship does not **have to suffer because one or both partners have arthritis. Sex itself will not worsen your arthritis. If it's** a regular part of your relationship, you should try to keep it so. There are several ways to overcome physical and emotional complications, but the element common to each solution discussed below is open communication between you and your partner.

Accept change

Learning that you have a chronic illness like arthritis can be devastating. Feelings of anger, resentment and depression are normal and require time to overcome. Managing your arthritis requires that you confront any negative feelings, accept the changes in your life and learn how to deal with them in a real and lasting way. Remember that arthritis has not changed who you are as a person. A positive self-image is key to restoring intimacy to your relationship.



There are plenty of available resources to help you deal with the emotional impact of arthritis. Your healthcare team (rheumatologist, physiotherapist, occupational therapist, social worker, pharmacist) will play an integral role in this process. To complement this care, you can also review our online course on [mental health and well-being](https://arthritis.ca/support-education/online-learning/mental-health-and-well-being): <https://arthritis.ca/support-education/online-learning/mental-health-and-well-being>

Communicate openly

Perhaps the biggest stumbling block to managing arthritis-related complications in a relationship is the **inability to discuss issues with your partner and understand your partner's perspective. Before talking,** it may help to set your thoughts down on paper to clarify the challenges as you see them. What physical symptoms interfere with intimate activity? What feelings do you have when you think about arthritis and your love life?

- When sitting down with your partner, recall the sexual needs each of you had before the onset of arthritis and talk about how these needs may have changed. Exchange thoughts on what you still hope to get out of the relationship. Ask how your partner feels about the changes in **your body. Find out what your partner wants, especially if some of the intimacy you've** previously enjoyed together is no longer possible.
- Open communication resolves many misunderstandings. Once you have re-established that level of trust and comfort with your partner, you can work together to arrive at mutually decided solutions.

Tell your partner what feels good

Only you know what you find satisfying or painful. A couple living with chronic pain – both the person in pain and the partner – must have a clear understanding of what feels pleasing and what causes irritation. Intimacy can be maintained, just maybe not in the same way as it was before.

- To determine the boundaries of sexual contact, experts recommend that each partner develop a **"road map" of the other's body. In a comfortable setting, one partner gently explores the other's body by touching. Take turns giving each other a massage. When your partner's hand** gets near a painful area of your body, simply redirect it toward a place where you enjoy the touch most.
- This process ends the guesswork between you and your partner and guides you as to how intimacy can be resumed and sustained.

Find a comfortable position

Most couples living with arthritis find it necessary to experiment with new positions for intercourse that put less strain on painful joints. Some **positions can be difficult, especially if you** or your partner has arthritis in the hip, knee, leg, arms or shoulders.

When trying new positions, make sure your partner provides most of the body action if movement causes you pain. Intercourse is possible with one or both partners lying, standing, kneeling or sitting. Using cushions to support the joints can also provide comfort to the partner with arthritis.



Find an alternative to intercourse

Even after taking every precaution, you might discover that intercourse is too painful. If this is the case, romance and physical contact are still possible and should not be abandoned. There are many ways to express affection and satisfy desires for intimacy.

Many couples find kissing and caressing enjoyable

alternatives to penetrative sex. The right touch on almost any area of the skin – the mouth, earlobes, neck, breasts, hands, wrists, small of the back and insides of the thighs and arms – can be very pleasing. Oral sex – the use of the tongue and mouth directly on the genitals – is an equally stimulating option. You and your partner may also wish to explore various sex aids, as this shared experience can improve intimacy and communication. Hugging and holding hands are also tried and tested ways of demonstrating warmth and caring toward each other.



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.

