



**ARTHRITIS**  
TALKS

# **Back pain and spinal osteoarthritis**

September 17, 2025



## Presenters



**Dr. Siân Bevan**

Chief Science Officer  
Arthritis Society Canada  
(Moderator)



**Anna Spillane**

Physiotherapy Educator  
Osteoarthritis Service Integration System  
(OASIS), Vancouver, BC

# Webinar tips

- Use the **Q&A** section to ask the presenters your questions. Some of the questions will be chosen for the live question period at the end of the webinar.
- Click on the **Chat box** to connect with other participants and the Arthritis Society's Canada's chat moderator.
- If you have further issues, email [arthritistalks@arthritis.ca](mailto:arthritistalks@arthritis.ca)

The screenshot shows the Arthritis Society Canada webinar interface. At the top center is the Arthritis Society Canada logo. Below it is a navigation bar with three buttons: 'Show captions' (with a CC icon), 'Q&A' (with a speech bubble icon), and 'Chat' (with a speech bubble icon). At the bottom of the interface is a dark bar with 'Audio Settings' on the left, 'Q&A' and 'Chat' icons in the center, and a red 'Leave' button on the right. A yellow callout box at the top right points to an 'x' icon in the Q&A window, stating 'Click on the x icon to exit out of the Q&A or Chat'. A yellow callout box on the left points to the 'Audio Settings' button, stating 'Click here to access your audio settings'. A yellow callout box at the bottom right points to the 'Q&A' and 'Chat' icons, stating 'Click here to chat or to submit a question'. A small window titled 'Q&A' is open on the right, displaying 'Welcome to Q&A' and 'Questions you ask the host and panelists will show up here'.

Click on the x icon to exit out of the Q&A or Chat

Click here to access your audio settings

Click here to chat or to submit a question



# Arthritis stole my ability to be a part of society.

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ARTHRITIS  
AWARENESS  
MONTH





**Osteoarthritis and  
the spine**



**Exercise for back health**



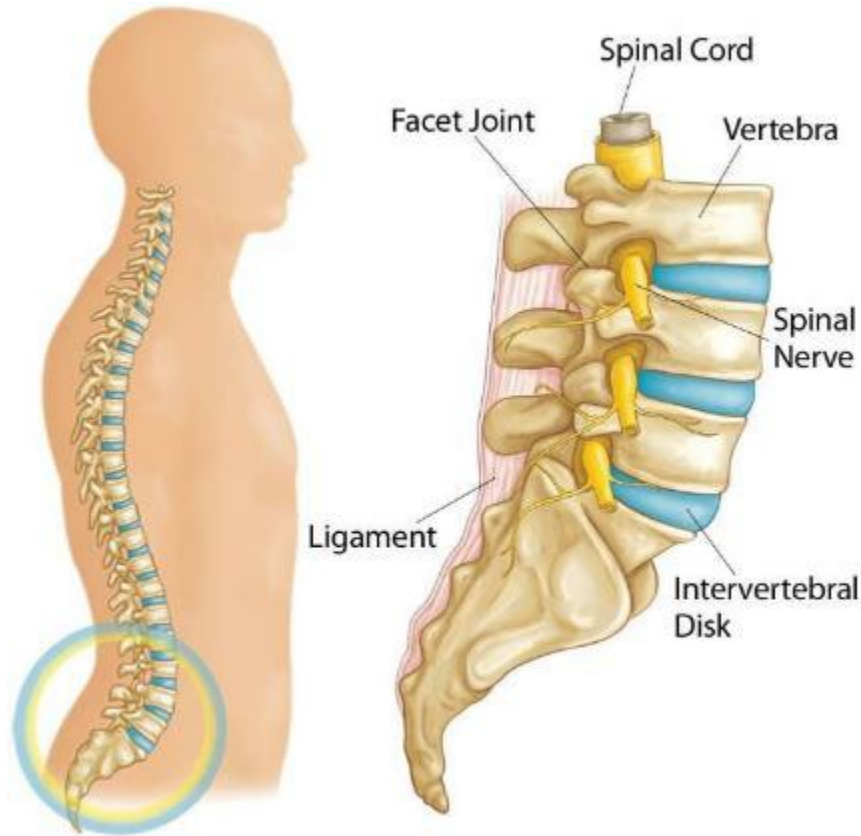
**Q & A**





**How does osteoarthritis and aging  
affect the spine?**

# Structures of the spine

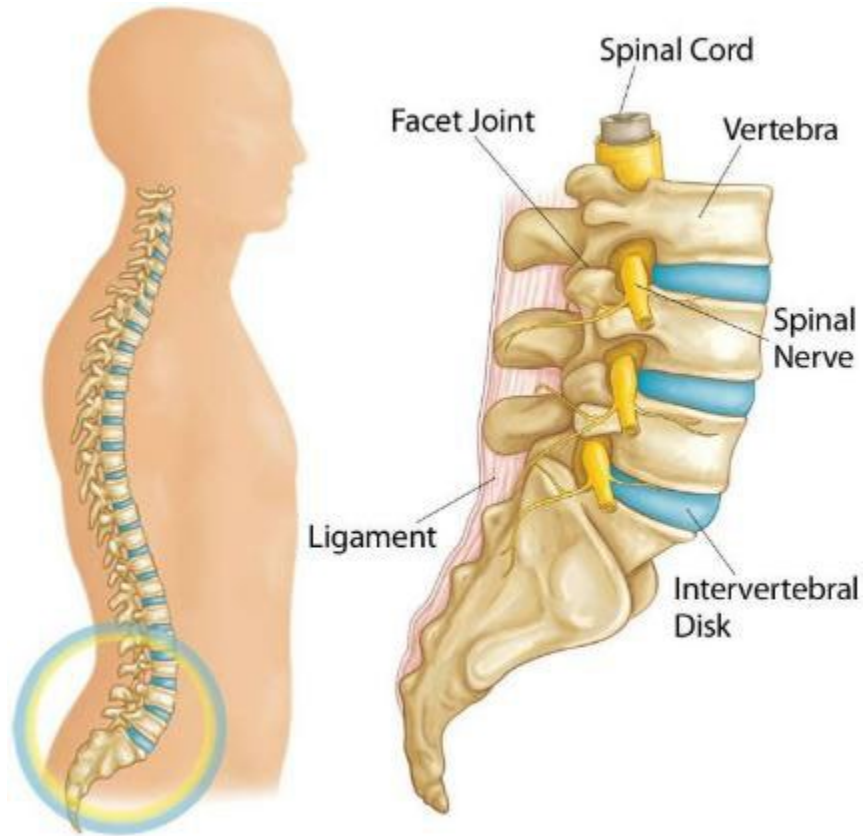


[www.orthoinfo.aaos.org](http://www.orthoinfo.aaos.org)

## Vertebrae

- 33 bones of the spine
- Protect the spinal cord, which travels through the middle part of each stacked vertebrae
- Joints between the vertebrae are called **facet joints**

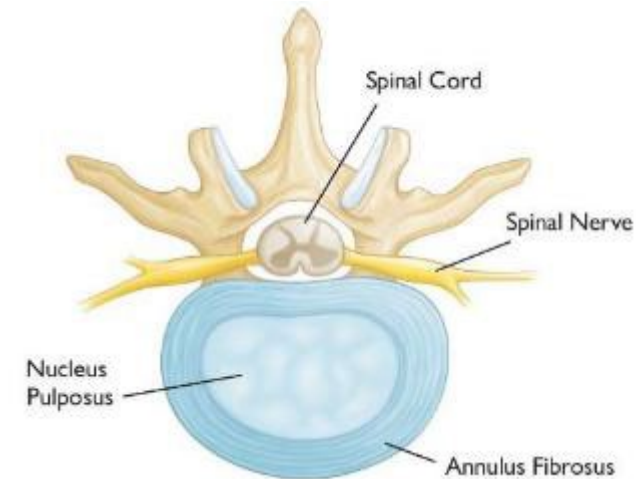
# Structures of the spine



[www.orthoinfo.aaos.org](http://www.orthoinfo.aaos.org)

## Intervertebral discs

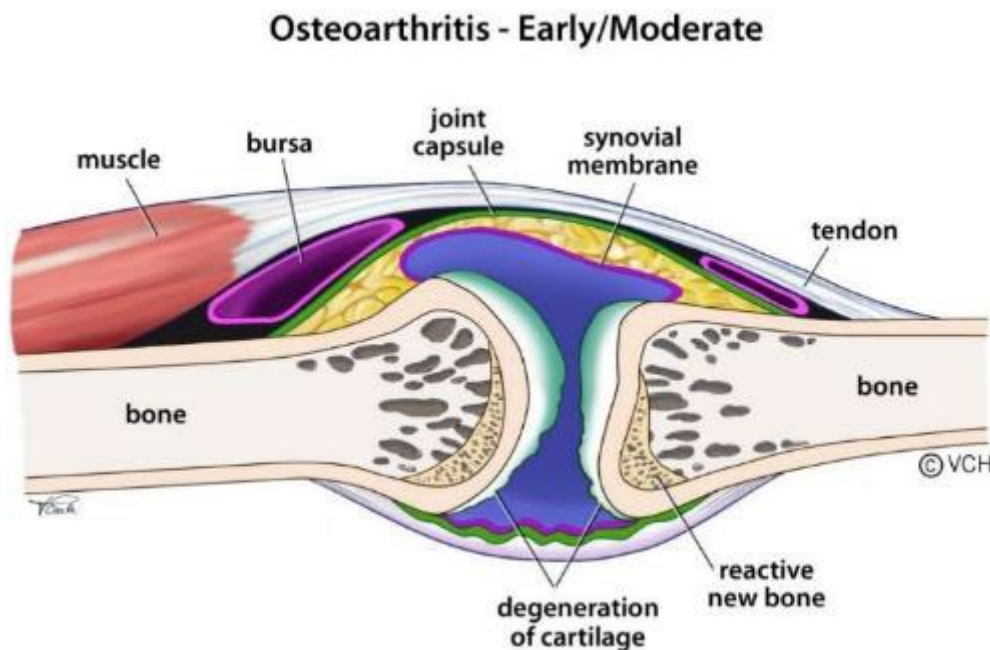
- Shock absorbers for the spine
- Inner “jelly” and outer fibers





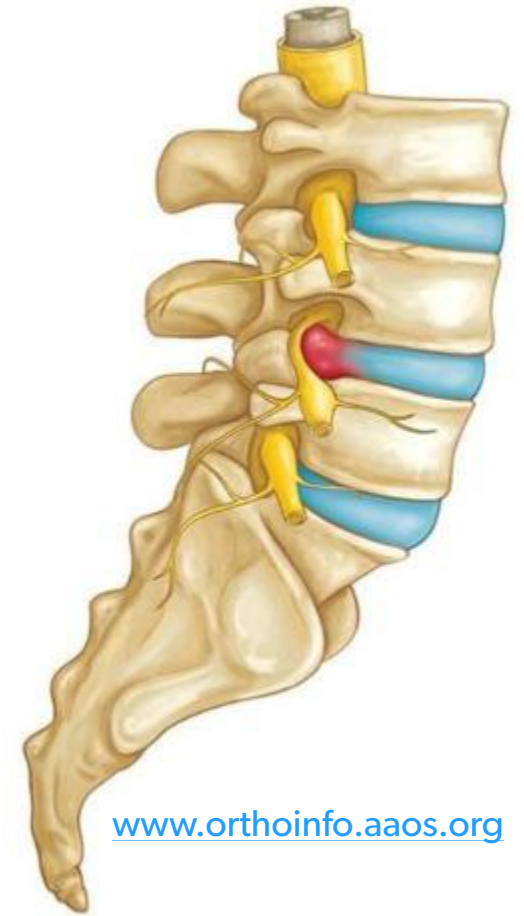
# Facet joint osteoarthritis

- The body's failed attempt to repair damaged joint tissues
- Changes to the joints between the vertebrae
- Cartilage thins
- Bone changes
- Changes to other joint structures - ligaments, muscles
- Common imaging finding without having symptoms



# Degenerative disc disease

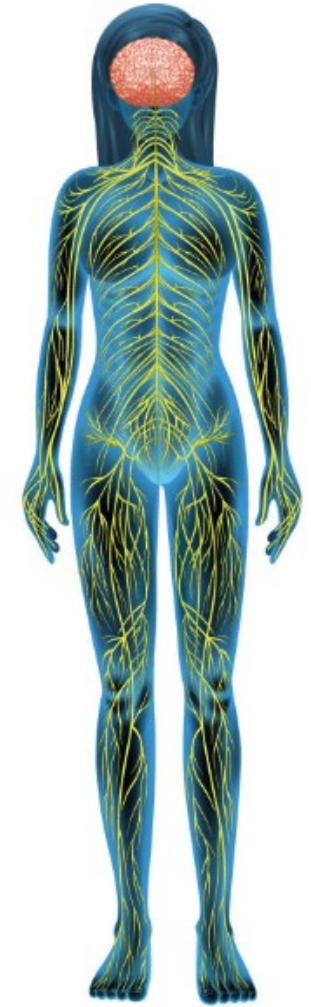
- Intervertebral discs become more brittle and flat
- More prone to injury and strain
- Disc bulge or herniation
  - Soft centre of the disc is pushed back in to the outer ring
- Increased loading through facet joints
- Also a common imaging finding without having symptoms



[www.orthoinfo.aaos.org](http://www.orthoinfo.aaos.org)

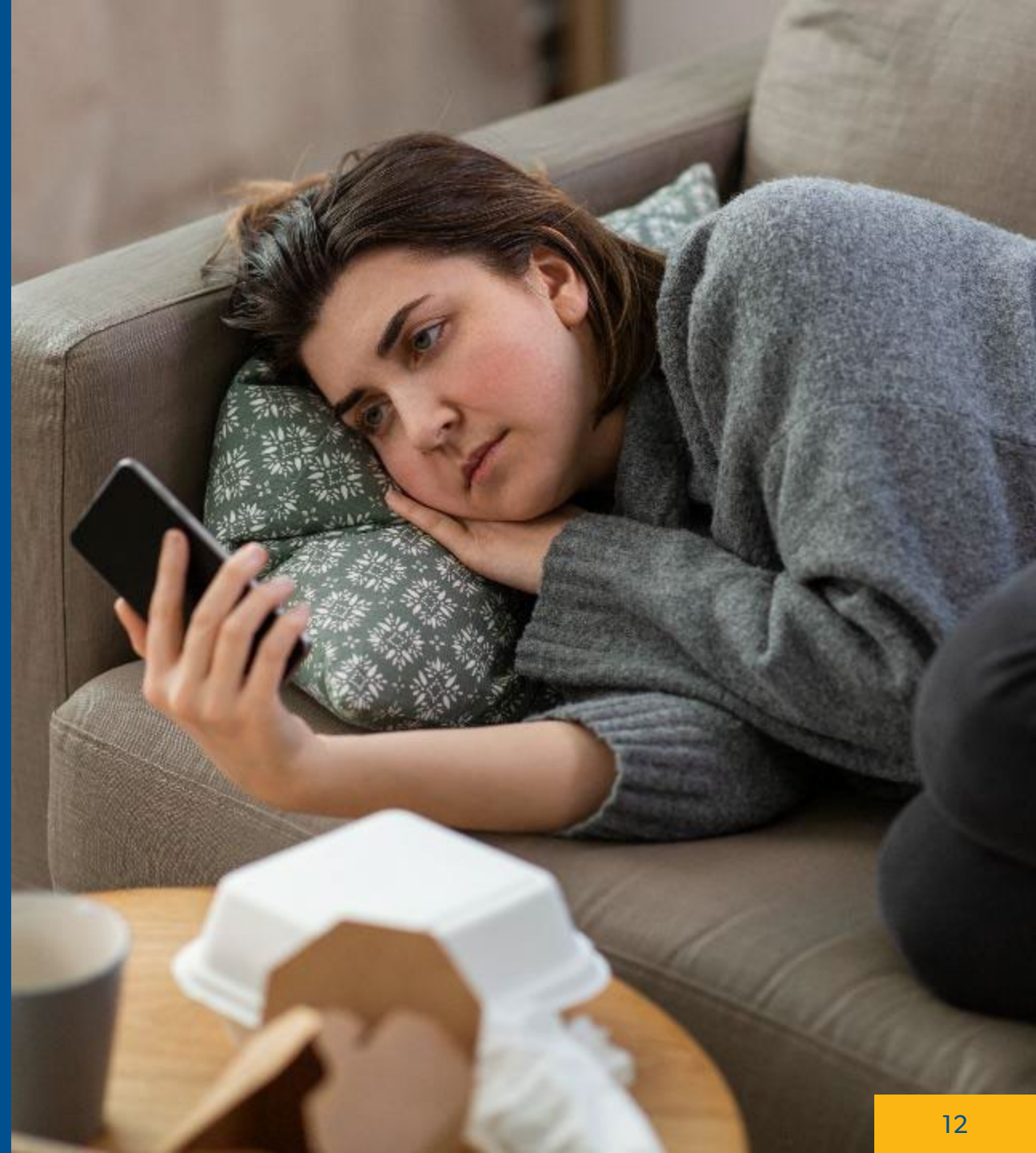
# What is radiating pain?

- Pain travelling to the legs (ex: sciatica) or arms from the spine along nerve pathways
- Pressure on the nerves exiting the spine
  - Bone spurs
  - Disc bulge or herniation
  - Inflammation from injured soft tissue structures
  - Muscular tension/spasm
- May be intermittent



# What else can contribute to back pain?

- Sedentary lifestyle
- Poor posture and prolonged sitting
- Weak back and abdominal muscles
- Decreased flexibility
- Improper or heavy lifting/activities
- Psychosocial factors - chronic stress, poor quality sleep







**How can exercise support back health?**

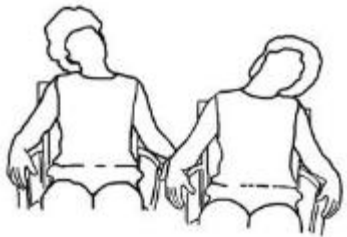
# Motion is lotion

- Do not fear movement - it is crucial.
- Build gradually towards a combination of:
  - Range of motion and stretching exercises
  - Low-impact aerobic exercise
  - Strengthening
- Start **SMALL** and slow



# Range of motion and stretching

- Gentle and slow daily movement
- Maintains joint health and mobility
- Consider using heat to help
- Start with lying/seated exercises
- Beginner gentle yoga



# Strengthening

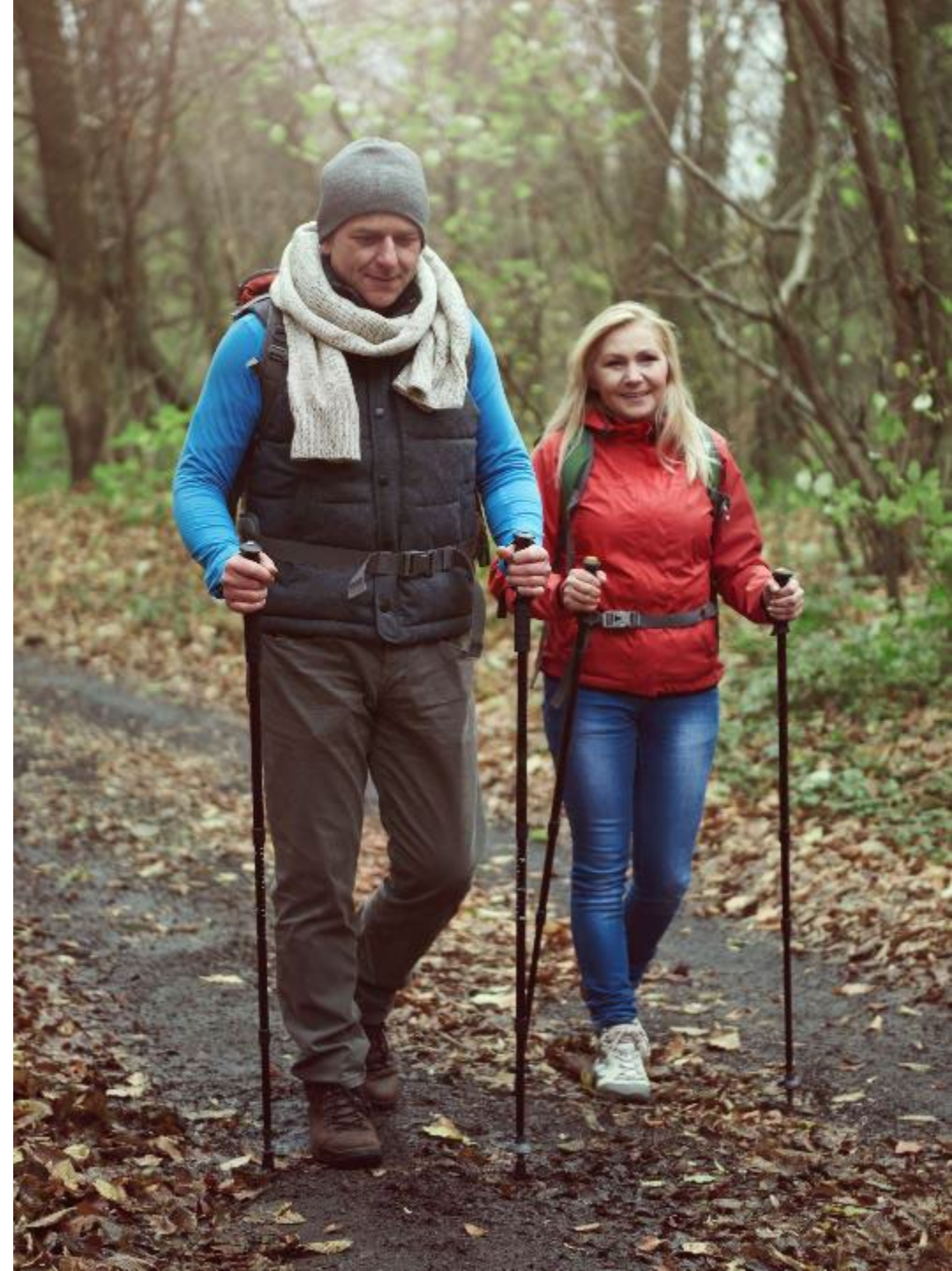
- Unloads, supports and stabilises joints
- Deep core muscles support and stabilise the spine, trunk and pelvis
- Learn how to “engage your core”
- Aim for 2-3 times per week
- Beginner pilates classes – alignment, strength and stability





# Low-impact aerobic exercise

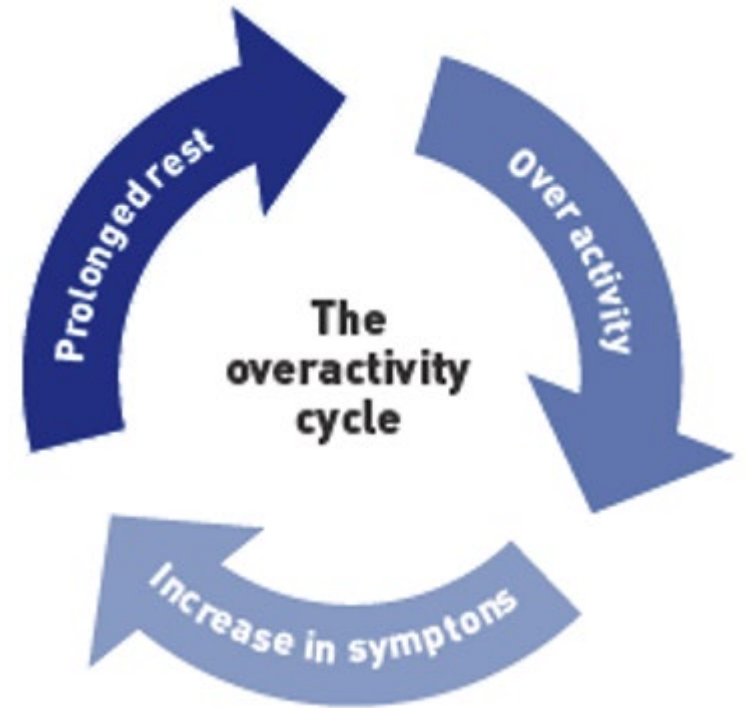
- Aim for 150mins/week at moderate intensity
- Most beneficial when done more regularly
- Walking
  - Consider aids & footwear
- Water exercise
- Biking
- Low impact aerobics
- Seated/upper body exercise



# What is sustainable for you?

- Consistency is key!
- Start now, start slow
- Set small, attainable goals
- Keep an activity log
- Physiotherapy-prescribed exercises
- Consider group/community program for support and guidance

We want to avoid...



# Navigating pain with activity



- Some increase in symptoms with movement can be normal, BUT...
- Pay attention to:
  - Pain that is moderate to severe during the activity
  - Pain that is long-lasting (>24 hours)
- Keep a Pain and Activity diary
- Pain management – October webinar!
- A change may be needed for next time





**What are your top tips for managing day to day activities when you have osteoarthritis in the spine?**



# Reduce sitting/ sedentary time

- Limit to <8 hours per day, and move as often as possible (*Canada's 24-Hour Movement Guidelines*)
- When do you tend to sit for long periods?
- What can cue you to initiate movement?



[csepguidelines.ca](https://csepguidelines.ca)



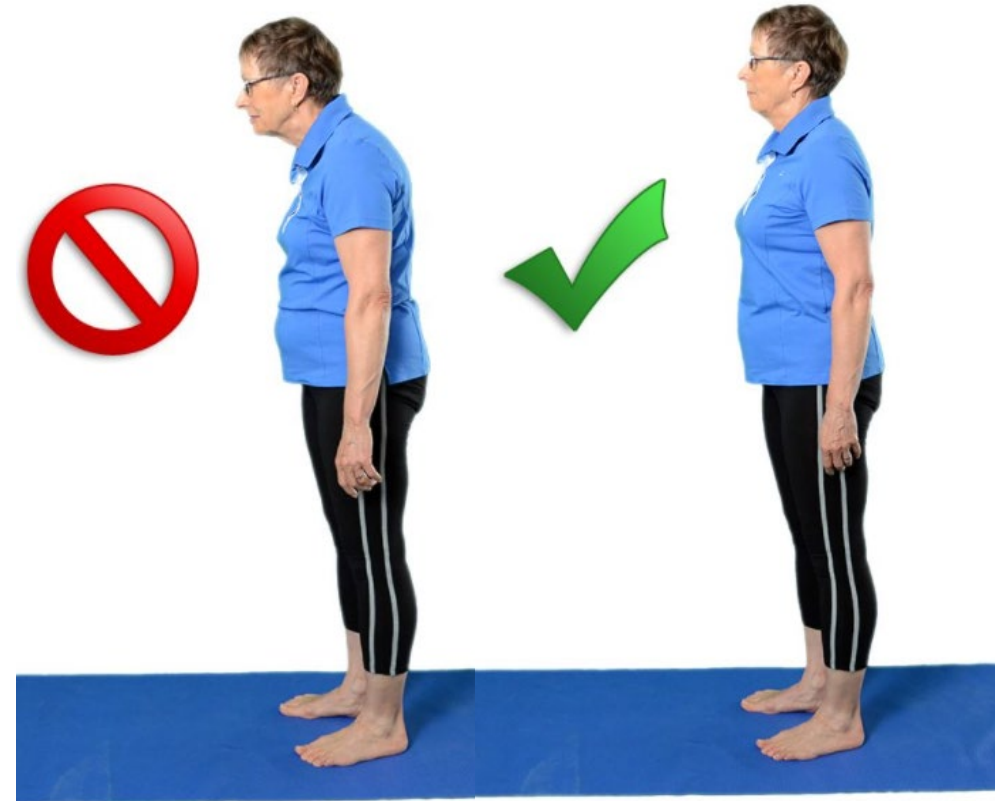
# The best posture is... the next posture!

- Prolonged, static positions increase load
- Alternate between sitting and standing
- Optimise sitting and standing positions
- Minor adjustments to positions can help
- Posture “check-ins” throughout the day



# Posture check-in: Notice it, change it, adjust it

- Visualize height
- Ears over shoulders
- Shoulders back and down



# Modify activities to protect your spine

- Balance activities with rest (lying if possible)
- Rest before you need to
- Can you wheel it, slide it or push it instead?
- Minimise prolonged bending and reaching
- Consider helpful tools/equipment





# Sleeping considerations

- Back or side positions are best
- Mattress - balance support and cushioning
- Choose pillows to support natural neck curve
- Try pillows to maintain spinal alignment in side-lying
- If investing, take your time and consider company policies
- What else is affecting your sleep quality?





# Questions



**Tell us what you think...**



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# Next webinar



## Find freedom from pain: Strategies that work

*With nurse educator Susan Johnston*

- Drug-free techniques to reduce inflammation and manage daily discomfort
- How to use medications safely and effectively
- Practical tools to protect your long-term mobility and independence

**October 8 | 6 p.m. EST**

To register, visit **[arthritis.ca/arthritis talks](https://arthritis.ca/arthritis talks)**

