

Health Connection

Your Good Health Newsletter

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Joint Protection: What You Should Know

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Contents

- 1 Joint Protection: What You Should Know
- 2 FYI
- 3 Arthritis Self-Help Course (ASHC): An Arthritis Foundation Program From the Editor
- 4 Spirituality and Health Go Hand-in-Hand HSS Leads the Way From the Studio
- 5 Exercise and Fitness for People with Arthritis
- 6 Health Link Affiliated Physician Offices

A joint is the point of juncture between two bones. Joints, because of their locations and constant use, are prone to stress, injuries, and inflammation. Among the most common diseases affecting the joints are osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis. If you are coping with arthritis or other conditions involving the joints, there are several healthy principles you can follow to maintain optimal functioning and protect your joints from excessive stress, overuse, and injury.



#1 Respect Pain Perform activities only up to the point of slight fatigue or slight discomfort. Pain lasting more than one hour after an activity is a warning signal. For pain relief, utilize heat and/or ice. For morning pain and stiffness, use a warm, electric heating pad or take a warm bath or shower being careful not to burn the skin. Contact your physician if pain persists.

#2 Balance Your Activities Set priorities and plan your day or week in advance to include healthy activities, rest, and relaxation. Begin a program of regular exercise as instructed by your physician, physical or occupational therapist. Exercise will help maintain strength, mobility, fitness, and your ability to meet the physical demands of daily life. Gentle range of motion exercises can be performed even when you are experiencing pain. For a healthy, balanced lifestyle:

- Spread out light and heavy tasks throughout the day.
- Take short rest periods between activities.
- Vary activities to include reading, hobbies, or social events that provide enjoyment and relaxation.

#3 Use Large Joints To accomplish tasks, use large, strong joints like the wrist and palm instead of the fingers; the elbow instead of the wrist; the shoulder rather than the elbow. Stress is better tolerated by the larger, stronger joints, so let them do the work. Follow these helpful tips:

- Use the palm when lifting or carrying small objects and use shoulder straps on bags or briefcases. Do not grip bag handles with your fingers or carry a handbag over your forearm.
- Use two hands or the side of your body to open heavy doors.
- Push up on your palms or forearms when getting up from a chair.

- continued on page 2

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Joint Protection: What You Should Know continued

#4 Distribute Weight Lift, carry, and hold items with both hands or with your arms. Avoid placing excessive weight or strain on one or two joints. Prolonged kneeling and squatting may cause harmful joint stress. Try these actions to help distribute your weight:

- Protect the knees with knee pads or floor cushions.
- Use two hands to carry pots and pans.
- Put one hand on the handle—use the other palm to support the bottom.
- Use both arms to carry grocery bags.
- Keep bags close to the body.
- Use two hands to hold a cup or mug.
- Use long handled equipment to clean floors and bathtubs.

#5 Change Position & Maintain Stability Enhance flexibility and mobility by changing position frequently and not holding joints in fixed positions for long periods of time. Do stretching exercises every 10-15 minutes when writing, typing, or using a computer keyboard, and use a high stool or chair during activities to avoid long periods of standing. Reduce stress by using each joint in its most stable and functional position. Avoid twisting and turning motions which decrease muscle power and joint stability and may result in injury.

#6 Use Aids/Techniques Many items and protective techniques may be used to decrease joint stress, overuse, and injury. Try the following techniques:


- Use cushioned soles or inserts to reduce spinal and leg stress.
- Avoid shoes that are too narrow or high-heeled.
- Use built-up handles made of foam or plastic for ease in holding pencils, toothbrushes, etc.
- Use a piece of rubber to remove jar lids, and open jars with the right hand and close with the left.
- Lie flat with the knees straight for one hour a day, and do not use a pillow under the knees unless you have back pain.
- Rest your head on the palm of your fully extended hand, avoid weight on your knuckles and do not make a fist or rest your knuckles under the chin or under the side of the jaw.

#7 Use Correct Posture Correct posture and alignment reduces stress and prevents injury. Use proper body mechanics to ensure safe activity performance:

- Keep back straight.
- Bend at the knees and hips, not at the waist.
- Separate feet to widen base of support.
- Avoid twisting or jerking while lifting.
- Keep load close to body.
- Stand on a low, stable foot stool when reaching for high objects.
- Avoid straining the neck and back.
- Use a reacher tool to grasp high or low objects.
- Select a firm chair with arms and good back support.
- Use a tall chair, high enough to sit down in and stand up from without difficulty.

• Scoot forward before standing up.
For back pain:

- Put a pillow between your knees when lying on your side.
- Put a pillow under your knees when lying on your back.
- Avoid lying on your stomach.

 **Medicare Rx Drug Coverage**
Beginning on January 1, 2006, Medicare will offer insurance coverage for prescription drugs via Medicare prescription drug plans and other health plan options. Coverage is available to all Medicare recipients and pays for both brand name and generic drugs. For further information about these significant amendments to Medicare coverage and your health benefit options, visit www.medicare.gov or call: 1.800.MEDICARE.

Exercise & Older Adults

A study published in the October 2005 issue of the *Journal of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons*, reports that aging athletes can significantly lower age-related musculoskeletal pain and muscle mass reduction by participating in a consistent, vigorous exercise regimen. It is particularly important that older adults considering intensive exercise programs work together with a physician to develop an individualized regimen. Always consult with your doctor before beginning any exercise program.

Arthritis Self-Help Course (ASHC): An Arthritis Foundation Program

by Marie Gammello, Arthritis Foundation Certified Fitness Instructor, Public and Patient Education Department

For people with arthritis, living the most active life with the least amount of pain, fatigue, and disability involves becoming an active partner in your arthritis care. This means working with your health care provider as well as learning how to manage your arthritis on a day-to-day basis.

The Arthritis Self-Help Course, an Arthritis Foundation program, is a group education program designed to help individuals learn and practice the different skills needed to build an individualized, self-management program and gain the confidence to carry it out.

The Arthritis Self-Help Course has many different program designs that vary in length from one and a half hour workshops to a course series

that is taught over six consecutive weeks in sessions lasting two hours per week. A trained instructor leads each course, which consists of active participation and includes lecture, discussion, brainstorming, and role-playing.

Anyone with any type of arthritis or related condition can participate in the course. Persons in support roles are also encouraged to attend. Benefits of completing the program include:

- Learning and practicing the skills needed to build your own individualized, self-management program
- Gaining knowledge of different types of arthritis and osteoporosis
- Making and carrying out action plans

- Learning to manage pain, stress, and fatigue
- Learning ways to deal with anger, fear, frustration, and depression
- Gaining exercise and nutrition knowledge
- Developing problem-solving skills
- Obtaining information on doctor-patient relationships
- Learning about the latest developments in alternative therapies

To learn more about the Arthritis Self-Help Course, contact your local Arthritis Foundation chapter. For help finding a chapter near you, call the Arthritis foundation at: 1.800.568.4045.

From the Editor

NEWS AND VIEWS Arthritis Q&A

Arthritis is one of the most common forms of joint pain, and millions of Americans are at risk.

Take a look at these frequently asked questions and answers about arthritis—be sure to have a discussion with your doctor if you are concerned that you may be experiencing symptoms. Early diagnosis and treatment is essential to a healthy, pain free life!

Q. Is stiffness in my joints when I wake up in the morning a symptom of arthritis?

A. Stiffness can be a symptom of

arthritis. Some individuals with arthritis report stiffness, particularly in the morning and after periods of inactivity.

Q. Can injuries to joints caused by an accident increase my chances of developing arthritis?

A. Physical trauma to a bone, joint or ligament, such as a hip or knee injury, can put the joint at greater risk for arthritis.

Q. Is joint swelling that lasts a few hours a sign of arthritis?

A. Swelling, particularly in the feet and ankles, that lessens within a day

may not be a sign of arthritis, but rather a sign of fluid retention. Normally, joint swelling due to arthritis occurs in one or more joints for an extended period.

Q. Is developing arthritis hereditary?

A. Genetic factors may increase your chances of developing some forms of arthritis, such as rheumatoid arthritis. Risk factors include age, weight, and previous joint damage or injury.

W. Fordham

Spirituality and Health Go Hand-in-Hand

by Arnd Braun-Storck, Chaplain, Patient Care and Quality Management Department

Have you ever wondered what chaplains actually do in hospitals and at bedsides? Perhaps they are praying or helping a patient find the right spiritual path. Well think again. As human beings, we are relational and part of a larger community. We enjoy our families, friendships, faith communities, clubs, and neighborhoods. The experience of hospitalization can be a rude interruption of our regular life. It may evoke feelings of doubt about fundamental beliefs and elicit questions about the meaning and purpose of life. Hospitalization can also make us feel vulnerable, anxious, and cut off from loved ones. All of these emotional factors can accompany physical illness.

Just as the medical staff provides excellent physical care, professional chaplains are available to give emotional and spiritual support during the process of treatment and healing.



Pastoral care addresses issues of identity, meaning, value, and worth which all may or may not be expressed in religious terms. Chaplains are there to listen, pray, support, and comfort patients, family members, and staff.

Many studies have examined the benefits of prayer and spirituality for people living with chronic conditions like arthritis.

Spirituality is part of a holistic approach to treatment. It is widely accepted that healing is more than a physical process. Emotional health and strong spiritual centeredness can support healing. A person is more than the culmination of physical functions. A human being is body, mind, and spirit! Spiritual practices, such as attending religious services, meditating, or praying can foster a positive outlook on life. Just as proper nutrition and exercise contribute to our well-being, we also need to have

a sense of belonging, of being connected with each other. In this sense, health and healing often have emotional, spiritual, and religious dimensions. Pastoral care responds to all these needs, to help each person who is in search of support, regardless of faith, traditions, and background.

“...professional chaplains are available to give emotional and spiritual support during the process of treatment and healing.”

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Winner of the
APEX Award
for Publications Excellence

From the Studio

“ I feel so wonderful afterwards, and it does increase my resolve to do more on my own. ”

- Yoga-lates Program Participant



HSS Leads the Way

Once again, Hospital for Special Surgery is top ranked in orthopedics and rheumatology in the Northeast in the annual *U.S. News & World Report* 2005 "America's Best Hospitals" issue. HSS ranked No. 2 in orthopedics, No. 3 in rheumatology, and for the first time, ranked 18th in neurology and 47th in geriatrics.

Exercise and Fitness for People with Arthritis

by Micheline Cerra, PT, Rehabilitation Department

Although exercise does not eliminate arthritis, it can significantly reduce pain, slow down progression of the disease, and allow you to function at optimal potential.

Every exercise regimen should be tailored and structured to meet your specific and individualized needs and goals. The following exercise program would be best implemented by a physical therapist recommended by your physician. The following are general guidelines you can follow.

A beneficial exercise regimen should be implemented three times a week for one hour. That hour can be best broken down into:

- 10 minute warm-up
- 20 minute functional training/weight training
- 20 minute cardiovascular
- 10 minute cool down

Your warm-up should consist of deep breathing exercises, shoulder shrugs, shoulder circles, and leg lifts. A functional training program should include a breakdown of whatever activity is becoming a hardship for

you. For example, if a flight of stairs is painful for you or if you feel weak, focus on the first step only. Go up and down on the first step ten times in a controlled manner, utilizing the hand rails if necessary. You should be able to achieve this in a pain free manner. Continue to face forward while descending the step. If the step is too high for you, try stepping up on a phone book for starters. Make sure it is a secure surface. If you are having trouble picking up an object off the floor, break up the process into steps and work on strengthening each step to achieve the entire task.

Weight training activities include postural exercises to strengthen your back and abdominal muscles. Weight training should focus on large muscle groups and ideally reflect functional activities. For example, squatting is a great exercise because it is a part of so many activities we perform throughout the day, such as sitting on a toilet seat, sitting down for dinner, getting into a car, etc. Proper technique is an essential element of a weight training regimen. If you are unsure of the proper technique, always consult your physician

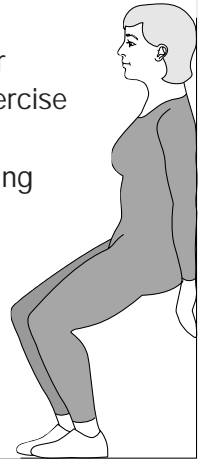
or physical therapist.

The cardiovascular component of an exercise regimen can include activities such as using a stationary bike or elliptical machine, or walking on a treadmill. The cool down consists of deep breathing exercises and stretches.

If any exercise causes you pain, stop immediately—exercising through the pain will only cause more inflammation. To get started with an exercise routine, consider taking one of the many classes offered at Hospital for Special Surgery, like T'ai Chi Chih, Pilates and Yoga. These modalities generally follow the aforementioned guidelines. Pool therapy is also a good adjunct to a land exercise program.

Remember, the main goals of initiating an exercise routine are to:

- Reduce stiffness
- Decrease pain
- Function at your optimal potential
- Develop a healthier lifestyle



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- Integrative Care Center
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- Uniondale (Long Island)
516.222.8881

New Jersey

- Princeton Office
609.683.5500

Connecticut

- Greenwich Office
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The Education Division's Public and Patient Education Department provides information to the general public and patients through a variety of health education programs. Professionals provide practical information to help prevent or manage health problems related to different types of arthritis or orthopaedic problems. Programs are held at the hospital as well as in the community. The department is dedicated to providing education today, so that everyone can have a healthier tomorrow.

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