

MANAGING YOUR ARTHRITIS

Through simple and inexpensive lifestyle changes



WHAT IS ARTHRITIS?



There are many types of arthritis, but all of them involve the inflammation of one or more joints and result in pain, swelling and stiffness. The most common types of arthritis are osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis.

It is estimated that as many as one in three American adults are affected by some form of arthritis, including almost half of Americans over the age of 65. Although there are many forms of clinical treatment, lifestyle management is a low cost and highly effective solution.

Risk Factors

The risk of developing arthritis increases with age, and women are more likely to be affected than men. Excess weight is also a risk factor since it increases the stress on joints throughout the body. Injury and infection that affect joints have been found to contribute to the development of arthritis.

MOST COMMON TYPES OF ARTHRITIS

Osteoarthritis

The most common form of arthritis, osteoarthritis occurs when cartilage on the ends of bones wears away as the result of overuse or age. With nothing to prevent the bones from rubbing together, swelling and pain often occur. You may have also heard this called degenerative joint disease.

Rheumatoid Arthritis

Rheumatoid arthritis differs from osteoarthritis in that it results from the immune system attacking its own tissue, which can cause swelling and inflammation. It generally affects the smaller joints in hands and feet, but can also affect knees and other joints throughout the body.

Gout

Gout is caused by a buildup of urate crystals in joints and results in sudden severe pain. The most common place for pain is the big toe, but it is possible for gout to affect other joints throughout the body. Contact your doctor about the best treatment.

COMMON SYMPTOMS

Joint pain • Joint swelling • Joint tenderness • Joint stiffness • Joint warmth • Fatigue

EATING WELL



A healthy diet is crucial when living with arthritis. The food you choose is important for two main reasons. First, many foods can directly affect inflammation, some positively and some negatively. A diet high in omega-3 fatty acids can help to reduce inflammation throughout the body, while foods high in saturated fats, trans fats and sugar should be limited as much as possible since they can contribute to systemic inflammation. By controlling systematic inflammation you can limit the problems it causes in the joints that are affected by arthritis.

The second reason it is important to eat a healthy diet is that extra weight increases stress on joints and can make arthritis symptoms more severe. For every pound of weight that is lost, joints have 4 pounds less pressure on them. Consuming the right foods and choosing correct portion sizes can help with weight loss.

Changing your diet may sound intimidating. Start with one meal at a time. Try planning a healthy breakfast for a whole week and see if you feel any better. Once you get in the habit of planning ahead you may realize it's easier than you thought to eat healthy foods consistently.

WHAT TO EAT

Walnuts and Flaxseeds— These are both great sources of Omega-3 that can easily be incorporated into meals throughout the day. Grab a handful of walnuts as a snack in between meals or add flax seeds to healthy baked goods.

Fish— Cold-water fish are a great source of omega-3 fatty acids. The best are salmon, mackerel, herring, halibut, tuna and sardines

Soybeans— Tofu and edamame both contain high levels of Omega-3 fatty acid.

Vegetables— Dark-green leafy vegetables such as spinach and kale contain small amounts of Omega-3. While they should not be the main source, every little bit extra helps.

Supplements— Fish oil is a great supplement if you aren't getting enough Omega-3 fatty acids through your diet.

WHAT TO AVOID

Saturated Fat— Avoid foods high in saturated fat- such as red meat and butter- as these can cause inflammation throughout the body and make symptoms worse. Fried foods, which are high in trans fat, should also be avoided.

Sugar— Sugar should be consumed only in moderation. Avoiding highly refined sugars (such as high fructose corn syrup) not only helps to prevent inflammation, but can also help prevent heart disease and diabetes. If you have a sweet tooth, opt for naturally sweet foods such as fresh fruit. Fruit is full of fiber, protein and sometimes fat which help slow the digestion and absorption of sugar.



HEALTHY SNACKS

Packing a healthy snack before you head out the door can help you avoid opting for less healthy options when you're on the go. The following are some easy options:

Whole Fruit— Healthy and ready to go, whole fruit is a great option for a snack between meals.

Nuts— Nuts, especially walnuts, are an easy and satisfying option. Check your local grocery store for a bulk foods section where they tend to be less expensive and you can decide exactly how much you'll need. Be aware that some nuts are heavily salted and should only be eaten in moderation.

Yogurt— Satisfying and easy, yogurt is a great snack option. Check the label to make sure you're buying a variety without too much sugar and try for Greek yogurt when you need the long lasting effects of a protein heavy snack.

Raw veggies— Vegetables are low in calories, but high in fiber and nutrients. Eat them raw for a satisfying crunch and to maximize the nutrients your body can absorb. If you prefer to eat them with something try humus, which is much healthier than traditional vegetable dips.

MYTHS

These are three of the most common myths about arthritis and diet.

Avoid the Nightshade family

Plants in the nightshade family, which include tomatoes, peppers, and eggplants, contain solanine. Although many guides and forums claim solanine causes arthritis pain, there is no scientific evidence to back the claim.

High-Acid Foods increase pain

There are no scientific studies that link high acid diets to arthritis pain. Highly acidic foods can temporarily affect the digestive tract, but they don't change the pH of blood. Your stomach naturally corrects the pH of nutrients as they are digested.

Avoid Citrus

Many "arthritis diets" have citrus on the blacklist of inflammation causing foods. Not only is there no evidence that citrus causes inflammation, but Vitamin C is a strong antioxidant which has been proven to decrease inflammation.

FOR THOSE WITH OSTEOARTHRITIS— Foods containing sulforaphane — such as broccoli, cabbage and brussel sprouts — may actually slow down the destruction of cartilage in people suffering from osteoarthritis. These foods are also shown to have anti-inflammatory and anti-cancer properties.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



Staying active is an important part of managing arthritis. Exercise can help to strengthen and loosen muscles which support the joints affected by arthritis. By preventing stiffness and building strength, regular exercise maintains mobility and can help reduce pain. Regular exercise can also help with weight loss which is important to reduce the stress on joints.

The best exercises for people with arthritis involve moderate activity levels with low impact such as walking, cycling, swimming, and yoga. Try a variety of activities to find out which ones you enjoy the most, and remember to start slow. It will take time to build up endurance and for you to feel the positive effects of exercise.

Establish a regular routine once you find activities you enjoy, and recruit a friend to keep you accountable and make it more fun. It's never too late to start being active, but remember you should talk to your doctor if you experience increased pain with any new exercise.

YOGA

Yoga is a traditional practice involving both the mind and body which has evolved into many different styles or “schools”. With its variety of poses, yoga encourages participants to stretch and strengthen muscles throughout the body in a calm and supportive environment. Consistent yoga can help to control pain and maintain flexibility for those suffering from arthritis.

Don't be intimidated if you have never tried yoga before. Many yoga centers offer special “gentle” classes which are a designed to be simple and stress-free for both beginners and anyone with physical limitations. Yoga is especially useful for those with back pain since many of the stretches focus on the lower back, hips and legs.



YOGA ON A BUDGET— While independent yoga studios can be expensive, many community and fitness centers offer group classes as part of their membership or at a discounted rate. There are also many great resources with online videos, but starting in person with an instructor is a good idea since they can help to make sure you are performing the poses correctly in order to avoid injury.

SNEAK IN EXERCISE

Too busy to set aside big chunks of time for exercise? Not sure you can stay motivated for 30 minutes at a time? Here are a few ways to sneak extra activity throughout the day.

In the Parking Lot

Park far away from the entrance when you stop at the store. The extra steps you take can add up if you do this a few times throughout the week.

At the grocery store

Take one more lap around the grocery store before checking out. Maybe you will remember something you forgot the first time around. Just make sure to stick to the outside, which generally had fresh food, so you won't be tempted by all the processed food in the middle of the store.

On the phone

Pace around while you are on the phone. Instead of sitting while you catch up with a friend or field a business call, stand up and walk around the room. At work, walk over to a coworkers desk instead of sending an e-mail.



STAY ACTIVE WITH WATER

Swimming is a great way for people with arthritis to stay active. By providing resistance in all directions and using buoyancy to reduce impact, water exercise is a great low impact choice. There are a variety of ways to enjoy staying active in the water.

- **Laps**— Swimming laps is a great way to get vigorous exercise in this low impact environment. Try different strokes to find a comfortable pace and motion.
- **Water Aerobics**— For those looking for a more varied and social experience aquatic aerobics is a great option. Classes are lead by an instructor who guides participants through a series of moves, often accompanied by music.
- **Water jogging**— This is a great option for runners looking to reduce impact on their joints. Most pools have flotation belts that members can borrow while they “run” up and down the lanes. Some pools even have areas with a light to moderate current.
- **Cycling**— Many pools have underwater bikes that can be used upon request. Check with your local aquatics center to see if they have one available.

PAIN RELIEF



MASSAGE

Massage can be useful in treating arthritis symptoms. Studies have shown that massage for knees, hands and wrists can help to reduce pain and increase function. Talk to your doctor about whether professional massage (either at a spa or physical therapy office) is a good option for you. Often you can ask to be taught how to do the massage yourself, saving both time and money while increasing the frequency.

OVER-THE-COUNTER MEDICINE

There are many pain relief products that can be obtained without a prescription. Most contain one of the three following ingredients as the pain reliever. Ibuprofen is the most popular ingredient used to treat arthritis pain but can have serious side effects, especially if you have a variety of other medical conditions. Talk with your doctor about the best option for you.

Active Ingredient	Benefits	Possible Side Effects	Avoid if you...
Aspirin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain relief • Reduced inflammation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • upset stomach • Heartburn • excess bleeding • allergic reaction • ringing in ears 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have stomach ulcers • have bleeding problems • consume more than 3 alcoholic drinks a day
NSAIDs (ibuprofen)*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain relief • Reduced inflammation and swelling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • upset stomach • Heartburn • Dizziness • Drowsiness • headache 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are allergic to aspirin • have heart disease, kidney disease, liver cirrhosis, high blood pressure, asthma or a history of stomach problems unless you check with your doctor • you take blood thinners or a diuretic unless you check with your doctor
Acetaminophen (Tylenol)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain relief 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • upset stomach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consume more than 3 alcoholic drinks a day • take another medicine with acetaminophen

*Topical creams and rubs containing NSAIDs can relieve pain with less side effects than the pill version

NATURAL REMEDIES

SUPPLEMENTS

Matcha- Powdered Green Tea

Matcha, made from finely ground green tea leaves, contains as much as twice the amount of antioxidants as brewed tea. It is very high in polyphenols, antioxidants which decrease inflammation and promote cartilage health. A 2009 study published in the Journal of Food Medicine showed that matcha decreased cholesterol, blood sugar, and blood-fats in rats. Adding Matcha to smoothies is a great way to bring it into your diet.

Fish Oil

Fish oils are a great source of anti-inflammatory omega-3 fatty acids that are shown to help ease arthritis pain. If the “fishy” aftertaste of the oils makes them difficult to take, try freezing the pills. This will allow them to go further down the digestive tract before releasing any aromas or tastes.

Capsaicin

Made from hot peppers, Capsaicin is applied in a topical cream or patch to the affected area. It works by releasing a neurotransmitter, substance P, which is used to relay pain to the central nervous system. Regular use will deplete levels of substance P and therefore decrease pain in the area.

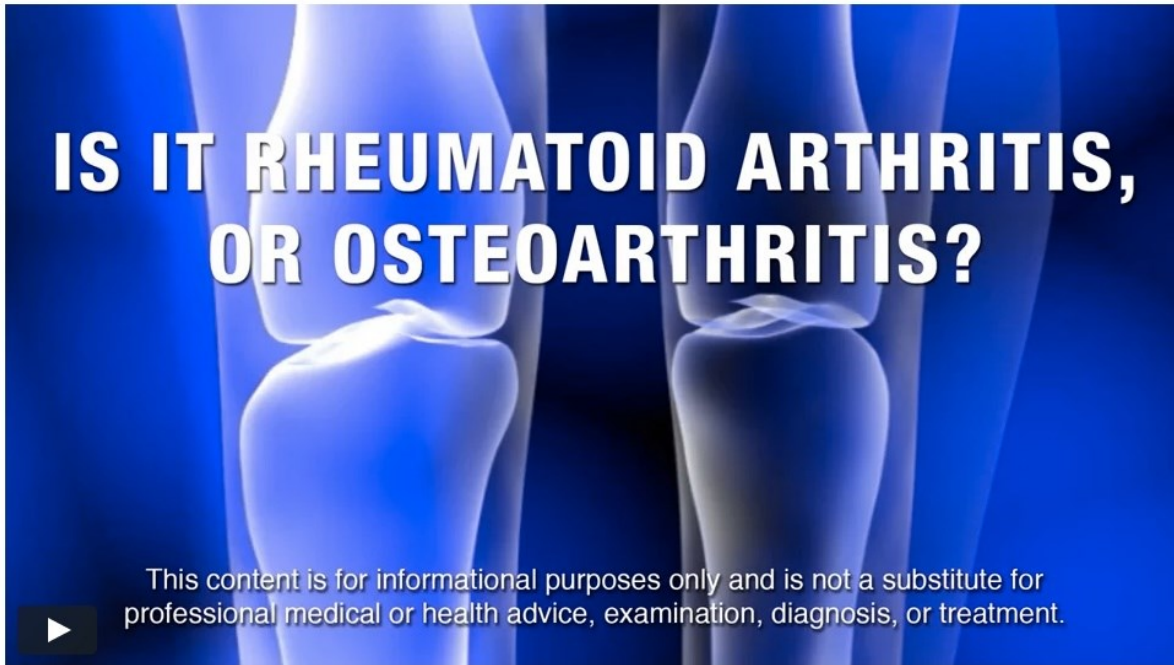
ACUPUNCTURE

Acupuncture involves carefully placing needles to stimulate muscles which then trigger the brain to release endorphins. This prevents the brain from receiving messages of pain and may provide some relief for those suffering from arthritis. There may be a little discomfort when the needles are inserted, but they are much thinner than standard medical needles. Electricity and warmth can both be applied for more intense treatment. Talk with your doctor if you are interested in incorporating acupuncture as part of your arthritis management plan.

PREPARE FOR ACUPUNCTURE

- Eat a light to moderate meal so you don't show up with an empty stomach
- Avoid caffeine and alcohol before and immediately after your appointment
- Wear loose fitting clothing





“Urgent Need” to Evaluate Evidence for Introducing New Joint Implants

By ThirdAge on Tuesday, September 23, 2014 @ 12:00 am

Ever since the failures in 2014 of some metal on metal hip implants were brought to light, the introduction of new joint implants has been the focus of major scientific and policy discussions. The safety of several new technologies “could be compromised,” warn the researchers, who call for improved stakeholder oversight to prevent patients from being further exposed to new devices “without proper evidence of improved clinical benefits and safety.”



An International research team led by Art Sedrakyan,

Knee Surgery No Help for Mild OA

By Sondra Forsyth on Tuesday, August 26, 2014 @ 12:00 am

A new study indicates that there is no apparent benefit to arthroscopic knee surgery for age-related tears of the meniscus in comparison with nonsurgical or sham treatments. The study, published August 25th 2014 in *CMAJ (Canadian Medical Association Journal)*, provides evidence that middle-aged or older patients with mild or no osteoarthritis of the knee may not benefit from the procedure.



A release from the publisher notes that as people age, the meniscus in the knee thins and becomes less flexible and more susceptible to tearing. When the meniscus tears, it can

Simple Tips to Protect Your Joints

By ThirdAge on Friday, November 14, 2014 @ 12:00 am

Medical professionals are an important part of managing arthritis. For example, your doctor can make sure you’re taking the right medications, and physical or occupational therapists can help you find safe and effective ways to exercise and modify your daily activities. But ultimately, the day-to-day work of managing your arthritis falls to you.



One way you can be active in managing your arthritis is by adapting your daily routine to relieve pressure on your joints. The following techniques from the experts at Harvard Medical School can help you avoid stiffness and lighten the burden on

Rheumatoid Arthritis: A New Villain

By ThirdAge on Wednesday, September 24, 2014 @ 9:54 am

Researchers have discovered that one key receptor plays a big part in provoking rheumatoid arthritis.

The finding, by investigators from the University of Illinois at Chicago College of Medicine, means that there is now a new target for potential treatments of RA.



The receptor, TLR5 or toll-like receptor 5, begins the damaging process of inflammation and bone degradation that characterizes RA, the researchers said. It’s found on cells in the fluid of arthritic joints.