

EXERCISE AND ARTHRITIS

AM I TOO OLD TO EXERCISE?

If Mick Jagger, who is 70, can perform an amazing 2 hour concert, jog 8 miles a day and do yoga and pilates then no one is too old for exercise. Find something you can do and feel better.

HOW DO I GET STARTED?

It is best to ask your health care provider what exercise may be best for you. Patients with disc herniation may be encouraged to avoid twisting or some types of yoga poses. Those patients with hypermobile joints may want to avoid exercise that over-stretches their already very stretchy muscles and ligaments.

There are many types of exercises you can engage in:

- Elliptical / treadmill
- Rowing
- Suspension training
- Yoga / Tia Chi / Qi Gong
- Cycling
- Walking
- Stretching
- Dancing / Zumba
- Water therapy / swimming

WHY EXERCISE?

Exercise has been proven to be an effective treatment for arthritis pain, yet people with arthritis frequently say the reason they do not exercise is because it hurts too much to move. Exercise can improve your health, improve circulation, reduce pain, improve sleep, improve your attitude and prevent further joint damage. For those individuals with arthritis, exercise is essential to keep muscles and tendons strong so the arthritic joints have more support. Think about it: When you are doing your everyday activities at home or at work, you are putting stress on your joints. If your joints have strong muscles to support them they have to work less. This is especially true of your back – strengthen your core and you will be less likely to sustain an injury.

Live longer and feel better. Studies have shown that any amount of exercise can increase your life expectancy and several long term studies show those who exercise at least 30 minutes a day live on average 5 years longer and healthier than non-exercisers.

FIND AN EXERCISE FRIEND/GROUP:

Having a friend or group to exercise with will increase the likelihood that you will continue your exercise program. Having someone who will encourage you and keep you going back for more will increase your enthusiasm for and enjoyment of exercise.

WHAT TYPE OF EXERCISE?

The best type of exercise is something you will stick with and will become part of your daily life. When exercise becomes a part of your routine, it will be easier to stick to a program. Sometimes if you have not been active in a while, it is okay to start with just 5 minutes of exercise twice a day and work up to a longer duration and more energetic workout. Remember: graded exercise is the key!

If it is hard for you to leave your home, then it would be best to find an exercise you can do right in the comfort of your home. All libraries have DVD rentals which contain various forms of exercise. You could take out a variety of exercise DVDs and see what type of exercise fits you best. Once you establish which exercise you like, then it is easy to go online and purchase an exercise DVD that is best suited to your needs.

Some types of exercise that offer little to no impact include: chair exercises, Tai Chi or water therapy.

Resistance bands, hand weights or even water bottles can be used to help increase muscle strength as your endurance improves.