

Arthritis-friendly workouts

When your joints ache, hitting the gym is one of the last things you want to do. But regular exercise is often just what the doctor ordered to relieve arthritis pain, says Bernard Rubin, D.O., MPH, member of the American College of Rheumatology.

EXERCISE THE BENEFITS

Exercise relieves arthritis pain because it helps support the joints by strengthening the surrounding muscles and tissues, improving flexibility and reducing stiffness.

“Most people don’t realize that if you take away the stress from the joints, you take away the pain,” Rubin says. “Exercise benefits arthritis sufferers in so many ways,” including a greater range of motion, more energy and improved daily function.

PAIN-FREE PICKS

A number of exercises are ideal for people with arthritis—the idea is to

find the one that fits your personality and lifestyle. Here are a few of the most popular and how they help ease the pain:

Walking. A daily walk helps reduce stiffness in the joints and can even reduce inflammation. Walking also helps you stay in shape and shed pounds, lessening the load on your knees and ankles.

Water activities. “Swimming and water aerobics are perfect for arthritis sufferers,” says Kristie Keir, PTA, member of the American Physical Therapy Association. “Because the water actually makes you lighter, you are exercising with less weight and stress on your body. Also, the warm water helps soothe joints and muscles.”

Yoga or tai chi. Because yoga and tai chi are slow-movement exercises, they are easier on arthritis sufferers’ bodies, Rubin says. Plus, both help improve strength, balance, flexibility and posture. ■

Start Me Up!

Want to start an exercise program to ease your arthritis pain? Here are a few tips from the Arthritis Foundation to help get you started.

1. Consult a medical professional. Before you start any program, talk to your doctor or physical therapist to see what options are right for you.

2. Pick an activity. Find something you enjoy and can do a couple of times a week. It can be as simple as walking, playing a round of golf or joining a yoga class.

3. Start slow. Ease into the exercise and don’t overexert yourself. Exercise is a great way to relieve arthritis pain, but if you overdo it, you can

put extra strain on your joints.

4. Have fun. Exercise doesn’t have to be a burden. Pick a program you enjoy.



Get Moving Today

For information on arthritis classes, events and activities in your area, check out the Communities section of the Arthritis Foundation Web site at arthritis.org/communities.