Arthritis or osteoarthritis is a common chronic disorder of the joints and mainly affects older people. In healthy joints, cartilage covers the surface of the joint and helps to absorb shock and allows for smooth movement.

In arthritis, the cartilage breaks down, tearing the ends of the bone unprotected and the joint loses its ability to move smoothly.

The most common joints affected by arthritis are hips, knees, big toes, spine and hands.

Arthritis and rheumatic disease are leading causes of pain and disability.
Right Professional

Accredited Exercise Physiologist

If you have arthritis and you’re thinking about incorporating exercise into your daily life, it’s recommended you consult an Accredited Exercise Physiologist for a tailored exercise plan that is safe for your individual needs.

Right Place

In a heated pool

Hydrotherapy and pool based exercise is best for your arthritic joints as the water provides excellent therapeutic benefits. A heated pool for water exercises is recommended (28 – 31 degrees C), as warm water helps to relax muscles and reduce pain.

Otherwise, if hydrotherapy isn’t your thing remember to choose a place with appropriate surfaces that provide shock absorption and stability.

Right Time

Exercise in the middle of the day

Choosing a time of day where the pain is least severe ideal. Middle of the day is a preferable time for you as this is generally the time of day that pain is typically least severe.

This is because while you sleep, your body temperature drops, leaving you stiff and lacking flexibility in the morning. Since flexibility helps your joints move in their full range of motion during a workout, you may not perform optimally first thing in the morning.

Middle of the day is also advised as this timing is in conjunction with the peak activity of pain medications.

Types of exercises recommended

Research shows that exercise can help people with a wide range of arthritic severity and pain. It is important people with arthritis choose a type of exercise that they enjoy and that can be easily incorporated into their daily life.

Exercise Right recommends aiming to exercise 4 to 5 times a week for at least 30 minutes.

Strength training – The thigh, hip and calf muscles, which are important for daily function, are often weak in people with arthritis. Resistance can be applied with weights, elastic tubing or body weight. Start lightly completing 2-5 repetitions using pain threshold as an index of intensity, as they improve gradually increase to 10-12 repetitions of an exercise.

Aerobic exercise – Activities may include walking, cycling, using a rowing machine or a seated stepper. High-impact exercises such as jogging should be avoided because it places high loading on the affected joints.

Aquatic (water) exercise – can be done 1:1 or in a class or group. Those with severe arthritis may find aquatic exercise useful, as the weightlessness minimises the load on your joints.

Other types of exercises – tai chi, balance exercises and stretching will improve flexibility and the range of motion of affected joints. It is important to always stretch within a pain-free range of motion.

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