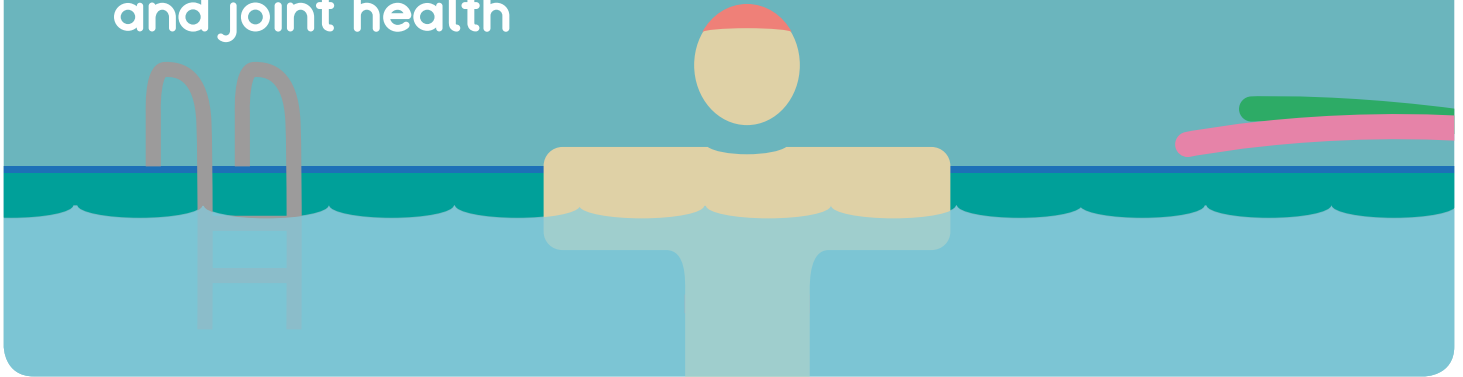




Physical activity for your muscle, bone, and joint health



This resource talks about how physical activity may affect you when you have health concerns related to your muscles, bones, and joints. It should be used along with additional information given to you from your family doctor.

People with a muscle, bone, or joint condition such as low back pain, arthritis, or fibromyalgia who are more physically active have:



- An increased quality of life
- Improved physical functioning
- Better sleep



- Reduce pain and improve pain tolerance
- Decrease inflammation and increase flexibility
- Strengthen surrounding muscles to protect the joints

Your physical activity can be **enjoyable**, **effective**, and **safe**.



Enjoyable



Some people may find it hard to get started with physical activity because they feel pain. It is best to start small and build up slowly. For some people, taking certain medication before physical activity can be helpful for joint or muscle discomfort. Being active with others can be a great way to make physical activity more enjoyable. Try different activities and find what works best for you; it can also be helpful to rotate your activities. If you're not sure how to begin, consider attending an exercise class or an organized walking group.

Effective



Aerobic activity has many benefits for people with muscle, bone, or joint conditions. For osteoarthritis, pain levels improve after 6-8 weeks, so keep at it. For rheumatoid arthritis or fibromyalgia, start at a low intensity and increase very gradually. Strength and flexibility training are very effective for any type of muscle, bone or joint condition.

Safe



The kind of physical activity you can do safely may be affected by your health conditions, your fitness level, and by your current treatments.

Getting started usually means moving 'little but often' with some light walking or similar types of activity. Gradually increase to a level that makes you feel like you are breathing heavier than normal, so that you can talk but not sing.

If you feel especially tired, you can try less intense physical activity for a shorter time, or take a day off and try again the next day. If physical activity starts to make your pain or stiffness much worse, please discuss this with your health care team.

Avoid physical activity and consult your doctor if you experience any of the following symptoms:

- Unusual fatigue or weakness
- Chest pain or an irregular pulse
- Difficulty breathing
- Feeling sick during activity
- Acute pain or injury
- Unexplained dizzy spells

Helpful resources



Learn about free programs for Living Well with Arthritis by contacting the Arthritis Society (1-800-321-1433).

Doctors in the UK have put together a website with informative videos and online pamphlets, including specific advice about physical activity for different muscle, bone and joint health conditions.

<http://www.benefitfromactivity.org.uk/why-am-i-doing-this/conditions/musculoskeletal-health/>

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