

*Best Exercise For*  
**OSTEOARTHRITIS**  
*Joint Health*



**Improve Your Condition And Alleviate Pain  
With Effective Workouts That Really Help!**

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## What Is Osteoarthritis

Many people are aware of what arthritis is, as it's a general term that is used to describe inflammation of the joints. Osteoarthritis is actually the most common kind of arthritis you can get. Although it can affect almost any joint in your body, osteoarthritis most commonly affects the joints of the knees, hips, and spine.

This condition usually affects cartilage, which is a slippery tissue that is known for covering the ends of bones in joints. This tissue serves as a shock absorber and helps your body by reducing the friction in your joints. Cartilage is able to work as a shock absorber thanks to the fact that it has the ability to change its shape whenever it gets pressed or flattened together.

However, osteoarthritis attacks this tissue, making it lose its elasticity and become stiff, which may cause your ligaments and tendons to stretch, thus causing you a huge amount of pain. Some people even experience their bones rubbing against each other as the result of cartilage deteriorating.

Osteoarthritis is a quite common condition among most people over the age of 60. However, the severity of this condition varies heavily among these people. Younger people (ones that are in their 20s or 30s) can also

get osteoarthritis, but there's usually another reason why they developed this condition, such as repetitive joint stress or injury.

## What Causes Osteoarthritis

There are a few factors that can increase the chance of an individual developing this condition. Some people inherit defected genes that make cartilage. Individuals that are born with certain joint abnormalities also have an increased chance of developing osteoarthritis.

Another factor that increases the chance of a person suffering from this condition is obesity. Obesity will increase the risk of osteoarthritis of your spine, knees and hips. Losing weight can not only prevent this condition, but it can also slow the progression of it down after being diagnosed.

Other factors that can contribute to the development of this condition include injury, joint overuse, and other diseases.

## How To Treat Osteoarthritis

Osteoarthritis usually gets treated through a combination of different types of specific treatments that include, but are not limited to, physical therapy, weight loss (only if needed), motion and flexibility exercises, medications, supportive devices, and removal of joint fluid.

Joint surgery also helps in relieving the pain, but through good exercise this procedure can be delayed or even completely prevented, (we'll talk about this in more detail later).

Of course, the treatment that a person will get depends on many things, including the person's age, medical history, overall health, severity of osteoarthritis, as well as the location of the condition.

Finally, it's very important for a person suffering from osteoarthritis to have a positive attitude, as that will strengthen their immune system and make it easier for them to handle the pain.

## Benefits Of Exercise For Osteoarthritis

If you already have osteoarthritis or are afraid that you may suffer from this condition, then you should definitely have a regular exercise program planned out.

There are a lot of great benefits that come along with regular exercise, including:

- **Strengthening your muscles** - If you haven't been in the habit of exercising regularly during your entire life, then your tendons and muscles that have the role of supporting your joints will get weaker as you get older. Therefore, by exercising, you will strengthen the muscles around the joints.
- **Decreasing the pressure on your joints** - Even if you're just ten pounds overweight, you will greatly increase the stress around your knee joints. By exercising, you will be able to lose weight and lower the pressure on your joints.
- **Improving your overall health** - When people start suffering from symptoms that are linked to osteoarthritis, they become less active and increase all health risks that are usually associated with a sedentary lifestyle (for example, diabetes, stroke, high blood pressure, heart diseases, certain type of cancer, and more).



However, when you stick to an exercise program, you will get a chance to improve your overall health.

- **Reducing joint pain** - If you don't exercise regularly, your osteoarthritis will actually get worse, and you'll suffer from even stiffer joints. However, sticking to an exercise program will increase the lubrication to the cartilage of your joints, which will in turn reduce your osteoarthritis symptoms of stiffness and pain.

**Other notable benefits of exercising also include:**

- Help you move better
- Decreased feelings of depression
- Enhanced mood
- Improved sleep
- Better daily energy levels
- It's great for your heart and lungs
- Reduces stress that can promote inflammation inside the body

Unfortunately, many people believe that they will be able to treat their osteoarthritis by resting and not doing any exercises (since they have to deal with a lot of pain whenever they move). Some people also think that you can cause damage to your joint tissues by exercising, but this is

simply a myth, as exercise will actually have a positive impact on your joint tissues.

Although your brain may register exercising as counterproductive (since these exercises will make you experience pain), you'll actually be doing yourself a favor if you start doing exercises as soon as possible.

However, despite wanting to feel better, there is still a huge amount of people with osteoarthritis who are completely inactive.

In fact, a study published by the Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine decided to measure the physical activity of 111 adults who have knee osteoarthritis.

In a surprising conclusion, more than 40% of men were inactive, while this number was even higher among women (56%). The term inactive was used to describe an individual who didn't participate in more than 10 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise during one week.

Unfortunately, only 12.9% of the men and 7.7% of the women that participated in the study did the recommended amount of physical activity (150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise per week).

## **Exercise May Delay Or Prevent Hip Surgery**

Taking part in a quality exercise routine can really help in slowing down the progression of osteoarthritis, while also relieving some important symptoms like stiffness and pain. If you're persistent enough, you may also delay or even prevent hip surgery.

However, note that over 50% people that start doing an exercise program to improve their condition stop doing it within a year. That's exactly why you need to have a positive outlook and try to motivate yourself every day however you can.

A study that was published by the Department of Orthopedics of the Oslo University Hospital back in 2013 concluded that exercising could postpone hip replacement in patients that suffer from mild to moderate hip osteoarthritis. The researchers saw that people who exercised for one hour at least two times a week for 12 weeks straight were 44% less likely to need total hip replacement surgery six years later than people who did not participate in any type of physical exercise.

This is noted to be the first study that concluded exercising could help in avoiding the need for hip replacement surgery in patients that suffer from hip osteoarthritis. In fact, even the researchers were pleasantly surprised with the results they gathered. As long as you're experiencing

tolerable pain and are diagnosed with mild to moderate hip osteoarthritis, an exercise program that you would follow regularly could be all you need to postpone hip replacement surgery (or maybe even avoid it completely).

The study also points out that the people that exercise more regularly experience less pain than those who are inactive. This is also one of the reasons why the inactive patients need to have total hip replacement surgery – the pain becomes unbearable for them.

## Best Exercises To Do

People that suffer from osteoarthritis need to find a way to incorporate aerobic exercises, resistance training, and range of motion exercises into their workout routine.

The type of exercises you will do depends on the severity of your osteoarthritis. With that said those who experience too much pain when trying to walk or jog a long distance should try doing some low impact exercises in a swimming pool.

This is because exercising in a swimming pool puts less stress on your joints, which will make the exercises you do much more tolerable. It will also provide you with a great way to overcome the pain and progress to doing land-based exercises.

*Note that even if you're comfortable with walking or jogging, you should also consider swimming, since it's a great aerobic exercise.*

Stretching will provide you with an excellent way to prevent or decrease joint stiffness. However, you should only stretch after warming up for five to ten minutes, as a warmed-up muscle is able to endure more and stretch longer.

## **Aerobic Exercises**

Aerobic exercises are also fantastic in controlling the symptoms of osteoarthritis. Those with joint conditions should look to low impact type of aerobic training that will elevate the heart rate, but not put excessive pressure on the joints.

**Some of the best aerobic exercises include:**

- Swimming and water aerobics are great choices since the water supports bodyweight and provides resistance and they are no impact activities.
- Biking
- Walking
- Water Aerobics
- Light dancing

## **Weight And Resistance Training**

Weight lifting and resistance-band training will help you by strengthening your tendons and muscles, which support your joints.

For muscle strengthening, you can also do isometrics and calisthenics and also use lightweight free weights.

Among patients that suffer from osteoarthritis, weight lifting can be quite challenging, but you should try doing this type of training two to three times a week. A typical weight lifting training should last somewhere between 20 and 30 minutes.

## **Chair Exercises**

There are many different great chair exercises that are ideal for arthritis sufferers. The chair provides support and can be used to execute various movements and it provides a way for those who have issues with mobility to do resistance training using free weights.

## **Pilates**

Pilates is an exercise routine created by Joseph Pilates, which increases the strength of the muscles using movements that align the spine and balance the body.

**It is a very low impact workout, and ideal for arthritis sufferer yielding these benefits:**

- It emphasizes core strength, which affects the entire body, to promote good posture, alignment and overall functional movement.
- Pilates improve balance, coordination, body awareness, spine stabilization and muscle control.
- Pilates also relaxes the muscles in the shoulders, neck and upper back.

- Pilates helps to build strength, which is especially important for arthritis sufferers who become weak over time and experience extreme pain.

## **Mind-Body Exercises**

Yoga, tai chi, and Qigong are all recommended for arthritis sufferers.

These mind-body exercises are low impact and provide the unique element of incorporating the mind and meditation to improve mental and physical health.

## **Exercise Schedule**

Once you get used to exercising regularly, you should be doing around 150 minutes of aerobic exercises of moderate-intensity every week (basically, 30 minutes of exercising five times a week).

Apart from aerobic exercises, you should also be doing muscle strengthening exercises at least two times a week. On top of that, also try including balance exercises to the mix.

However, according to WebMD, if you're suffering from hip or knee osteoarthritis, it's best to avoid exercises like jogging, running, jumping rope, high impact aerobics, and basically any activity that requires you to have both feet off the ground at the same time.



## Precautions

Before you even think of starting with an exercise routine, you need to **check with your doctor** and get the green light. Once you do that, then next step you need to take is finding some enjoyable ways to incorporate certain exercises in what will become your daily exercise routine.

However, note that the type of exercises you will do depends on the severity of your condition. Nevertheless, it's important to choose an activity that you know you'll enjoy.

Know that even though your doctor may give you the green light, the pain you feel may be unbearable for you to do the exercises you would like to do. If it comes down to this, you should ask your doctor to refer you to a physical therapist.

A physical therapist will help you by putting together the perfect exercise routine that will consist of adequate strength training, range of motion exercises, pain relief strategies, and stretching exercises.

Make sure you avoid any activities that are known for aggravating joint pain. Also, don't do any exercises that can strain an unstable joint!

A common mistake that happens among people who are really persistent with exercising is that they push through the pain even when their joints get extremely swollen or hot.

When your joints are like this, know that exercising will actually increase the damage and will cause additional pain. You shouldn't exercise too much because it will make it harder for you to determine if it's arthritis pain or pain caused by a workout.

For example, feeling a little soreness one or two days after a workout is totally normal, but if you feel it for a longer period of time, you might've caused some damage by working out excessively.

Along with regular exercise, it is important to note that you also need a good amount of sleep. Know that by getting a good amount of sleep every night, you will actually experience less pain, which will not only make it easier for you to exercise the next day, but will also help with your mood and stress levels. After all, you'll be able to enjoy your days way more if you experience less pain.

If you're also suffering from obesity, it will be much harder for you to do the adequate exercises. Not only are obese people twice as likely to suffer from osteoarthritis, but their weight can make their condition much worse, as it will put way more pressure on their joints. In order to

start losing weight faster, make sure you start eating healthier and regularly do the exercises you're able to do.

It's a great idea to keep an exercise journal that will help in providing you with the motivation to exercise every day.

Before every workout, make sure you warm-up. Remember that it's equally important to cool down after a training session as well.

## Knowing Your Limits

Although a good exercise program will improve your condition, know that you should know and respect your limits. By exercising too much, you may start experiencing certain setbacks that will slow down your recovery.

### Soreness vs. Pain

If you're new to exercise, you can expect some muscles soreness for a day or so after your workout.

If you are experiencing pain more than an hour after you've exercised, then you should either decrease the intensity of your workout or change your exercise program.

Beware of excess pain in your joints as that may indicate that you are working too hard, or may need to change technique. At this point, you should consult your doctor or personal trainer to define a safer workout plan.

It's best to exercise daily. However, know that it's much better to do a few short sessions instead of one long workout. For example, it is better to do three 10-minute walks in one day instead of one long 30-minute walk.

When you start exercising, you should take it easy and slow at first. Remember that you shouldn't get scared and begin doing exercises all day long in order to get stronger in the shortest amount of time possible. Your goal should be working up to moderate and vigorous exercises.

## Final Thoughts

After asking your doctor for the green light and getting additional guidance from a physical therapist, you need to remember that the rest is up to you.

The speed of your recovery depends entirely on your motivation and persistence.

Just because you may not experience results instantly doesn't necessarily mean that your exercise program is ineffective. Know that it may take six to eight weeks for you to see some results.

When creating your exercise routine, be sure to combine aerobic exercises, resistance training, and range of motion exercises. However, make sure to know your limits.

By exercising too much, you may potentially cause more damage to your joints and end up experiencing even more pain. However, if you do quality exercises the way you're supposed to regularly, you will see many benefits.

For example, if you're suffering from hip osteoarthritis, you may even delay or avoid hip replacement surgery.