

MOVE IT! MONDAY

Ways to Keep Your Joints Healthy



The body is supposed to move; our joints allow for movement. In fact, movement eases joint stiffness, reduces joint pain, strengthens the muscles which surround the joints, and help us maintain a healthy weight. The benefits are real, so keep moving!

Maintaining Your Ideal Weight Is Important for Joint Health With regard to optimal joint health, it is necessary for us to [maintain our ideal body weight](#). Carrying excess body weight adds stress to our joints, especially the weight-bearing joints. For each pound that we lose, there is a four-fold reduction in loading forces on the knee when a step is taken, according to a 2005 [study](#).

Strengthening Muscles Around Joints Improves Joint Health

The muscles that support our joints must be kept as strong as possible. You can work on maintaining or improving your muscle strength by doing strengthening exercises. Weight training is often used as part of a strengthening regimen. Be careful to pace your workouts and not overdo. With proper strength training, you will increase the stability of your joints, while decreasing pain.

Range-of-Motion Exercises Enhance Flexibility and Mobility

To preserve your current range of motion or improve it, you should routinely put each joint through its full range of motion. Extend, bend, or rotate each of your joints. Range-of-motion exercise improves flexibility, relieves stiffness and pain, and helps us to keep our joints functional.

Vitamin D and Calcium Are Important for Joint Health [Vitamin D](#) and [calcium](#) are two nutrients that are required for healthy bones. Vitamin D is actually needed for calcium absorption. You can obtain vitamin D through sun exposure, diet, or supplementation. Many people need some supplementation. Your doctor can order a blood test to determine if you are deficient in vitamin D. Low calcium is associated with decreased bone density and increased fracture risk.

Keep Moving to Maintain or Improve Joint Health The body is supposed to move; our joints allow for movement. In fact, movement eases [joint stiffness](#), reduces joint pain, strengthens the muscles which surround the joints, and help us maintain a healthy weight. The benefits are real, so keep moving!

Low Impact Exercise is Beneficial for Your Joints The desired benefits of regular physical activity and exercise can be achieved with low-impact exercise—a gentler type of exercise that minimizes the stress put on joints during high intensity workouts. For example, according to the [Arthritis Foundation](#), low-impact exercises that are easier on your joints include aquatic sports, such as swimming; social sports, such as golf; walking, and cycling.

An Anti-Inflammatory Diet May Be Beneficial for Joint Health An [anti-inflammatory diet](#) involves avoiding foods that increase inflammation while including more foods that decrease inflammation. Many sources suggest that a [Mediterranean diet](#) is a good choice for keeping inflammation under control.

Stop Smoking to Improve Bone and Joint Health

According to the American Association of Orthopaedic Society, "Most people are not aware that smoking has a serious negative effect on your bones and joints." Specifically, smoking increases the risk of [osteoporosis](#) and fracture. Smoking also increases the likelihood of injuries involving bursitis or tendonitis. Smokers also have a higher risk of low back pain and [rheumatoid arthritis](#). Stop smoking to improve bone health and joint health.

Joint Protection Is Important for Optimal Joint Health :

- pay attention to pain signals
- avoid activities that stress joints or increase pain
- pay attention to proper body mechanics
- balance activity & rest
- check out available assistive devices or mobility aids
- maintain a healthy weight