

Find a Spring Exercise Routine That's Easy on Your Knees



Spring's warm weather often inspires us to get out and get moving. If you have arthritis, this is one of the best moves you can make. Studies show that staying active is key to living well with arthritis. Exercise can help you boost your flexibility, physical function, aerobic capacity, strength and overall sense of well-being. Avoidance of physical activity could double your risk of being unable to do everyday tasks such as dressing, eating, bathing and cooking. What kind of exercise is best? Experts recommend walking, swimming and bike riding. Here are some tips that can make these activities easy to start and enjoy.

Walking

Walking is one of the best activities for you, and it's also the simplest and most convenient. All you really need is a good, supportive pair of walking shoes. Start at a slow pace. Spend about four minutes moving at about half the speed you intend to go. Next, stop and stretch the fronts and backs of your upper and lower legs. Then go a comfortable distance. Increase your mileage by no more than 10 percent per week. Don't worry about speed. A daily walk is a good exercise goal for most people.

Swimming

Swimming provides an overall whole body workout. Plus, water holds up your body. This takes stress off bones and joints and decreases the risk for injury. Even if you know how to swim, always swim with a partner. It's more fun and safe. Know your limits—do only as much as is comfortable. Do not go in water that is so deep that you cannot touch the bottom if you need to take a break. To make water workouts more effective, vary your routine by alternating laps of crawl with laps of breast, side or backstroke. Make use of kickboards, hand paddles and buoyant barbells.

Bike Riding

When you have arthritis, it's important to choose a bike and accessories that will make the ride more comfortable on your joints. To protect joints from road bumps, choose a mountain bike with fat tires and a suspension system. A padded, well-fitting seat adjusted to the right position is key to easy riding. Consider wearing padded bike shorts for more cushion. Also, get a helmet. When you're ready to ride, start slowly, with 15- to 30-minute rides. Then, gradually increase your riding time each week.

To Your Health!

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