

Move More with Less Pain: A Physical Activity Guide for Hip and Knee Osteoarthritis

Transcript

[0:00 Physical Activity]

Dr. Anthony Levinson: Physical activity is vital to maintain joint health and decrease pain. A good target is at least 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity each week, in bouts of 10 minutes or more. So, what should you do? No-impact and low-impact activities are best for those with osteoarthritis. The key is to choose something that you enjoy and make it part of your routine.

[0:30 No-Impact Activities]

Dr. Anthony Levinson: Cycling is an excellent option. If balance is an issue, a stationary bike is recommended. In some instances, a physiotherapist may recommend a peddler on the floor to minimize the risk of falling for those who might be at risk.

People often ask if they should choose land or water exercises. While one isn't better than the other, individual preference is the most important factor. Still, you may experience less pain with water-based activities such as swimming, aqua fit classes, hydrotherapy, or simply running or walking in the deep end of a pool with a flotation device.

Tai chi is a traditional Chinese mind-body activity that combines meditation with slow, gentle movements and may help people with knee or hip OA with strength, balance, and fall prevention, as well as mood.

Though less well-studied, yoga may also be helpful for OA of the knee. With yoga, you may need to modify some positions as kneeling on the floor for some yoga postures may not be comfortable, and getting off the floor may also be an issue as well.

[1:48 Low-Impact Activities]

Dr. Anthony Levinson: Walking on even ground is an excellent choice and can be enjoyed all year round. 30 minutes of continuous walking is often recommended. Still, if this doesn't work for you based on your current abilities, studies have shown that breaking walking up into shorter 'bouts' provides similar benefits. Choose level, even ground over hilly or uneven surfaces. Avoid routes with heavy inclines or declines, and stay on smooth gravel trails or asphalt. Unfortunately, walking on a beach is hard on an arthritic joint.

The Arthritis Society encourages people to take a walk every day as it allows you to stretch your back and leg muscles and combats stiffness in joints due to inactivity. Always pay attention to maintaining good posture by standing tall with your chest high and keep your abdominal muscles tight.

If your osteoarthritis is mild and you don't have a lot of symptoms, using a treadmill or an elliptical trainer are good options.

If using a treadmill, avoid running on inclines. Elliptical trainers don't provide the opportunity to practice the full range of motion of your joints and so, once again, biking may be a better alternative.

Dancing and cross-country skiing are also good options depending on your interests and abilities.

If exercise is new to you, you should discuss this with your doctor or physiotherapist to ensure you're exercising safely. If you're unsure of what to do or how much to do, consider seeing a physiotherapist or athletic therapist who knows about osteoarthritis to gain instructions on doing movements with correct form.

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