

Managing Osteoarthritis

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your joints. Being overweight puts pressure on joints and may change the way the joints are used (biomechanics). Reaching and maintaining a healthy weight may relieve pain, improve function, and slow the progression of OA.

Good choices for exercise are activities with low impact, slow, or graceful movements — which can improve balance, reduce stress, and offer arthritis pain relief.

Healthy Diet. A healthy diet may help you achieve a normal weight. A healthy diet may also improve OA symptoms. OA is thought to have an inflammatory component. An anti-inflammatory diet has foods that are rich in antioxidants and Omega-3 fatty acids. These foods may decrease inflammation. Additionally, people with OA should ensure plenty of Vitamin K-rich foods are in their diet, as Vitamin K has a role in bone/cartilage mineralization. Antioxidant-rich foods include berries, nuts, kale, spinach, and legumes. Foods with plenty of Omega-3 include fish (salmon, mackerel, tuna, herring, and sardines), seaweed, flax seeds, and chia seeds. Vitamin K-rich foods include green leafy vegetables, spinach, and broccoli.

Exercise. While there is no cure for OA, exercise can slow progression, reduce pain, and maintain or improve function. Regular exercise can help strengthen muscles and improve flexibility and balance. Exercise is part of managing OA every day. The benefits of regular exercise also include decreasing risk of other diseases, such as heart disease.

Good choices for exercise are activities with low impact, slow, or graceful movements—which can improve balance, reduce stress, and offer arthritis pain relief. Tai Chi, Yoga, or simple walking are some examples. Simple walking is a great way to incorporate exercise into your daily routine. Even short walks are helpful. Activities like swimming or biking are often easily available and helpful too. The key to exercise as a helpful intervention for OA is to make it a part of your daily

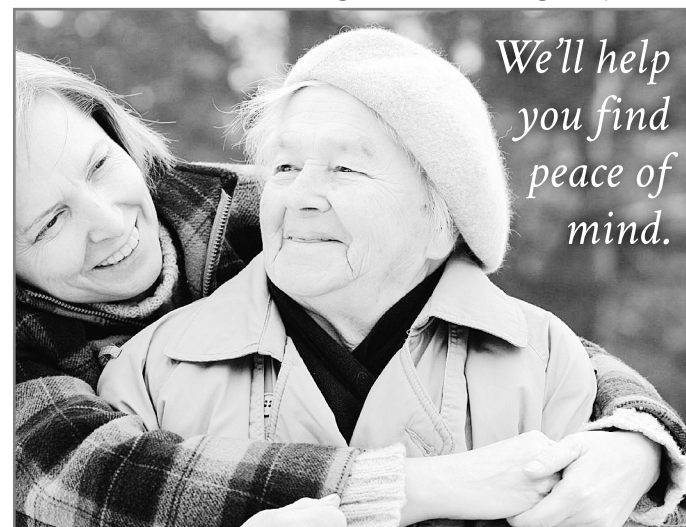
schedule. You can do this by setting small goals to be active.

Mindfulness. Mindfulness can be helpful in managing symptoms of OA. Mindfulness is the awareness that arises through paying attention to the present moment in an open and nonjudgmental way. Mindfulness is a way to be in an emotionally calm state. This allows people to view their illness from a new perspective and has been shown to improve perceptions of pain. An example of a simple mindfulness activity is sitting in a chair with eyes closed and deep breathing for one minute. Set goals to schedule mindfulness moments into your day and build upon this foundation.

Chronic Disease Self-Management Programs such as “My Life, My Health,” offered through LifePath, are a great way to apply these recommendations.

Finally, researchers at the University of Massachusetts Amherst Elaine Marieb College of Nursing are conducting a **web-based fatigue management study** to encourage a simple walking activity for adults age 65 and older who have rheumatoid arthritis- or osteoarthritis-related fatigue. We would like to know what you think about our website and invite you to take part in four brief meetings and complete three short surveys telling us about your fatigue level, cognition, and demographic information. We will teach you how to use our website, and then you will be asked to use the website at home for four weeks.

You will be paid a total of \$80 if you complete the study. All the activities are done remotely through Zoom or phone calls. If interested, please call or email to Dr. Jeungok Choi (jeungokc@nursing.umass.edu) or Reem Alalawi (ralalawi@umass.edu) at 413-404-9313 or at the University of Massachusetts Amherst Elaine Marieb College of Nursing to join!



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What is Osteoarthritis? Arthritis affects millions of people around the world and is the leading cause of disability. There are many types of arthritis. Osteoarthritis (OA) is the most common form of arthritis, affecting 27 million adults worldwide. The number of people experiencing OA is expected to rise. By 2050, it is projected that 130 million people will suffer from OA. People with OA are at additional risk for other diseases, such a heart disease.

OA is defined as age-related degeneration of the protective cartilage that cushions the end of bones. OA causes changes in the bone and connective tissue that connect muscle to bone. Inflammation is also thought to play a role in OA. OA is a progressive disease. There is no cure for OA, but there are ways to manage the progression and symptoms.

OA is a disease process that affects the joint as a whole and may affect joints in hands, ankles, knees, hips, and the spine. OA is most commonly a problem with the weight bearing joints, such as hips and knees. OA can affect anyone but is especially prevalent in older and obese people. People who have had previous injuries are prone to OA.

People with OA may experience symptoms such as pain, aching, stiffness, swelling, and/or decreased flexibility of their joints. In addition, it is not uncommon to have symptoms associated with OA such as fatigue. The symptom of fatigue is also common in Rheumatoid Arthritis. As the Arthritis Foundation (2023) describes, fatigue may be related to pain and inflammation impacting sleep or from inactivity and loss of muscle mass.

While arthritis is a progressive, chronic disease, there are ways you can manage OA symptoms. Here are some key ideas that may be helpful for managing OA symptoms.

Healthy Weight. The largest modifiable risk factor for OA is being overweight. Reaching and maintaining a healthy weight can help decrease the workload on