

# Senior Scene



## Safety and smarts necessary when exercising with arthritis

Physical activity is a vital component of a healthy lifestyle. While the recommendations for exercise may vary for each individual, general guidelines from public health agencies typically suggest most people should get around 30 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise per day.

People with arthritis may be hesitant to head to the gym or engage in home workouts because the instinct to rest is strong when joints feel stiff or painful. However, health care advocates note that movement is one of the most effective treatments for arthritis.

Recent data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says arthritis remains a leading cause of disability in 2026. Roughly one in four adults in the United States have been diagnosed with some form of arthritis. The Arthritis Foundation says exercise is not just a lifestyle choice, but an essential component of joint health. Peo-

ple who engage in physical activity report a 40 percent reduction in pain on average. Here is a prescription for safely navigating physical activity while managing arthritis.

- Emphasize exercise that improves flexibility. The Better Health Channel says people with arthritis should focus on exercises that reduce stiffness and keep joints moving through their full range-of-motion. Examples include gentle neck rotations, shoulder rolls and finger stretches daily, especially in the morning during flare-ups.

- Incorporate low-impact aerobic movements. Cardiovascular exercises improve heart health and help with weight management, which is essential for people with arthritis. The Arthritis Foundation says losing just one pound of body weight can remove four pounds of pressure from the knees. Walking, cycling and water exercises are low-impact ways to get the cardio a

body needs, says the Mayo Clinic.

- Make resistance training part of your routine. Building strong muscles can help protect the joints by acting as shock absorbers. People can use body-weight exercises like chair squats, resistance bands

or light dumbbells to build muscle. The Arthritis Foundation recommends focusing on the muscles surrounding joints experiencing the most pain, such as quadriceps for knee arthritis or abdominals to protect the hips and spine.

- Assess pain. Experts suggest using something called the “two-hour rule” to determine if exercise added to or diminished arthritis pain. If joint pain is higher two hours after exercising, then it’s important to reduce the duration or inten-

sity of exercise the next time. During a flare-up, do not stop moving entirely, but shift to gentle range-of-motion stretching only, suggests the Mayo Clinic.

Exercise can remain a key component of daily life, even for those with arthritis.

## Skin cancer prevention for seniors

Wisdom and age frequently go hand in hand. But when it comes to knowledge of the latest medical advancements, some older adults may not be up-to-date.

Medical recommendations evolve over time. After all, it wasn’t too long ago people were told to avoid foods containing high amounts of dietary cholesterol because it would raise their own blood cholesterol levels. Now MedlinePlus says the general consensus is that eating dietary cholesterol has a minimal impact on blood cholesterol for most people. And people in their 70s may have raised children thinking it was fine to lay the child in the crib on the baby’s stomach. Now the advice is “back is best.”

Medical professionals now know that exposure to ultraviolet rays of the sun and tanning beds can contribute to the development

of skin cancer. But just a few generations ago people were slathering on baby oil and using suntan reflectors to accelerate tanning. The risk of skin cancer is raised for those who have had cumulative exposure to the sun. So it is essential that seniors practice sun safety every day so they are not adding to the damage that already may have occurred. It’s also foolish to think, “I’ve made it this long without skin cancer, and it takes decades to develop, so I’m never going to get it.”

No one knows how long they will live and it’s important to take care of oneself to live as strong, healthy and long as possible. To that end, seniors can employ these sun safety tips, courtesy of the Skin Cancer Foundation.

- Learn the facts. Suffering just five sunburns over your lifetime more than

doubles your chances of developing melanoma, and each successive tan or sunburn raises the risk even further. Suntans damage the skin’s DNA and age it before its time. Also, skin undergoes changes that reduce defenses against disease and healing. One bad burn as a senior may be the final straw.

- Use sunscreen. Sunscreen may not have been widely used when today’s seniors were young. Just because that was the norm then doesn’t mean things can’t change now. It’s never too late to reduce your skin cancer risk by lathering on sunscreen daily — even when the sun doesn’t seem particularly strong. Seniors should look for a broad-spectrum sunscreen with SPF 30 for daily use.

- Wear protective

clothing. Choose tightly woven, long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and wide-brimmed hats to protect you. You can purchase clothing that has sun protection built right in.

- Avoid being outside during certain times of day. Stay out of the sun when it is at its peak. Radiation is typically the strongest between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. That’s when the risk for skin damage is highest, says the American Cancer Society.

- Seek shade. When spending time outdoors, seek shady spots, whether you’re under an umbrella or in tree-lined areas.

Sun safety for seniors is generally the same for people of all ages. But it becomes a more urgent necessity due to cumulative sun exposure that comes with age.

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