

Taking Charge of Arthritis and Joint Health

Did You Know?

If you have been diagnosed with arthritis or experience joint pain on a regular basis, you are not alone. Arthritis is a term used to describe more than 100 conditions that involve the joints and/or surrounding connective tissue. Osteoarthritis is the most common form, and is caused by gradual breakdown of joint cartilage that cushions the bones. Cartilage is found in the knees, hips, hands, and spine. Arthritis symptoms include redness, heat, pain and swelling.

Common Arthritis Myths

"Losing weight won't help my arthritis."

The heavier you are, the more likely you are to have arthritis. A weight loss of just 11 pounds can decrease your chance of developing knee osteoarthritis.

"If I have arthritis, I shouldn't exercise."

Thirty minutes of moderate physical activity at least three days a week can decrease pain and improves the function of your joints. Activity can be broken down into shorter 10 minute periods spread across the day.

"Medications are the only way to deal with joint pain."

Pain medications can be prescribed by your doctor, but there are other safe and natural ways to ease arthritis pain, such as massage or acupuncture. What works for one person may not work for someone else.



Tips for Healthy Joints

- **See Your Doctor**

Although there is no cure for most types of arthritis, early diagnosis, treatment and taking charge are important. If you think you have arthritis, tell your doctor so that he/she can help you relieve stiffness and pain. Tell your doctor if you take any herbs or over-the-counter medications.

- **Protect Your Joints**

Avoid joint injury to reduce your risk of developing osteoarthritis.

- **Take Charge of Pain Management**

Arthritis pain can be made worse due to stress, fatigue, anxiety, depression, and focusing on the pain.

As an alternative to medications, you can try:

- Resting the sore joint
- Massage therapy
- Topical pain relievers like Ben Gay, Icy Hot and Flex-All 454
- Alternating heat and cold treatments like a warm shower or putting ice packs on your joint.
- Keeping a positive attitude.
- Using ergonomic tools with and large handles and large grips.
- Maintaining a healthy weight.
- Exercising. Moving your joints will help reduce stiffness. Exercise and activity reduce joint stiffness and increases flexibility and balance.
- Relaxing! Have a good laugh. Read some comics or a funny book.
- Enroll in self-study programs like the Arthritis Foundation's Self-Management Program or community classes offered at your local senior or community center.



For More Information:

- Learn more about how to manage your arthritis. Call the Arthritis Foundation at 800-383-6843, or visit www.arthritis.org
- Locate a qualified Arthritis Exercise Trainer in your community. Visit the West Virginia Osteoporosis and Arthritis Program at www.wvbonenjoint.org or call 304-558-1717.
- Find easy to follow tips for taking charge of your arthritis at the American Arthritis Society. Visit www.americanarthritis.org, or call 877-294-7062.

Taking Charge of Diabetes

Did You Know?

Over 250,000 West Virginians live with diabetes, yet one third of them have not been officially diagnosed. Diabetes is a medical condition that affects your pancreas and its ability to produce insulin. Insulin is a natural chemical found in your body that breaks down sugar from the food you eat.

In *Type 1* diabetes, your pancreas doesn't produce any insulin. *Type 2* diabetes, the more common form, develops when the pancreas does not produce enough insulin or does not use insulin efficiently. People with either type of diabetes can benefit from a balanced lifestyle that includes physical activity, healthy eating habits, and routine health care.

Take Charge!

Diabetes doesn't have to control your health. By managing your diabetes you can take control of how you live your life and help prevent long term negative effects of diabetes.

- Know the warning signs. Talk to your doctor if you are experiencing any unusual symptoms such as:
 - Numbness or tingling in your feet or hands
 - Sores, wounds or bruises that do not heal
 - Increased frequency of infections
 - Changes in your teeth and gums
 - Dry skin and increased thirst
- Control of your blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar levels by eating nutritious foods and being physically active throughout the day.
- Take charge of your eating habits. What you eat has considerable impact on your blood sugar levels, a significant factor in controlling diabetes.



Eating a balanced diet of fruits and vegetables, lean meats and whole grains such as brown rice and oatmeal, is a great way to start!

- If diagnosed with diabetes, stay current with routine check-ups. Schedule a regular diabetes check-up every 2-3 months and a dental exam every 6 months.
- Talk to your doctor to make a diet and exercise plan that's right for you.

Tips for Controlling Diabetes

There are many simple things you can do everyday to manage your diabetes.

- Check for any open cuts or wounds, especially on your hands and feet. Tell your doctor if bruises, open wounds or sores do not go away. Slow healing can be a sign of poor blood circulation or nerve damage.
- Brush your teeth and floss everyday to prevent gum disease and loss of teeth. Notify your doctor if there are any changes in your teeth or gums.
- Tell your doctor if you have noticed any changes in your eyesight.
- Maintain a healthy weight. Thirty minutes of activity over the course of most days is a great way to keep in shape and maintain recommended blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar levels.
- Take prescribed medicines everyday, even when you feel good.
- Record your daily sugar levels. Make sure you share this record with your doctor.
- Participate in community health screenings.

Find Out More

Visit the American Diabetes Association (ADA) at www.diabetes.org or call 800-342-2383 for resources and programs sponsored by your local ADA chapter.

Find a nutrition and physical activity plan that's right for you through 'Diabetes & Me' at www.cdc.gov/diabetes/consumer/.

Visit www.wvdiabetes.org or call (304) 558-0644 to find diabetes classes and medical specialists in your county.

Taking Charge of Your Heart Health

Did you know?

Your heart works hard for your body day and night. It beats over 4 million times a year. You have about 60,000 miles of blood vessels. If placed end to end, your vessels would stretch 2 ½ times around the Earth. If the arteries in your heart get small or clogged, your heart muscle cannot get enough blood and oxygen.

What can you do to help your heart work best?

Tips for Protecting Your Heart

Take care of yourself and your heart every day!

- ♥ **Stay Active** – Don't think 'exercise' – think about moving more. Standing is better than sitting; walking is better than standing. Be active at least 30 minutes a day on most days of the week, even if you do it 10 minutes at a time.
- ♥ **Eat right** – Healthy food habits can help control blood cholesterol, blood pressure, and your weight. Eat regular meals and small portions. Choose fresh foods that are a variety of colors – especially green, yellow, red, and orange.
- ♥ **Get check ups** – Go to your doctor regularly. Talk to your doctor about your blood pressure, cholesterol levels, blood sugar and weight.
- ♥ **Keep in touch** – Socialize with your family, friends, and neighbors. Phone calls, visits, talks, walks and e-mails give you a healthy support system, especially when you need help.
- ♥ **Kick Butt** – If you use tobacco, you have a higher risk of illness and death from heart attack, stroke and other diseases. Being around other people who smoke increases your risk, too. The good news is that when you stop smoking—no matter how long or how much you've smoked—your risk of heart disease and stroke starts to drop.



Know the warning signs

- Every minute counts during a heart attack. It is critical to know the warning signs and to act quickly. Call 911 right away if you have any of these symptoms:
 - ♥ Chest discomfort or pressure, fullness, squeezing, or pain in the center of the chest that lasts longer than a few minutes, or comes and goes
 - ♥ Spreading pain to one or both arms, back, jaw, or stomach
 - ♥ Cold sweats and nausea
- Women may experience other symptoms in addition to or instead of chest pain. Be aware that heart attack warning signs for women also include:
 - ♥ Shortness of breath
 - ♥ Nausea or vomiting
 - ♥ Back pain
 - ♥ Jaw pain
- **Remember to call 9-1-1** – If you or someone has symptoms, never wait to call for help. Emergency medical service (EMS) staff can begin treatment when they arrive. If you can't access emergency medical services (EMS), have someone drive you to the hospital right away. Don't drive yourself unless you have no choice.

Find Out More

Visit the American Heart Association on the internet at www.americanheart.org, or call 800-242-8721 to find out more about activities hosted by your local chapter.

Find health and physical activity information and resources in your community by visiting www.healthywv.com or by calling 304-925-0342.

Taking Charge of Your Health

What's Important To You?

If it's important to you to be able to take care of yourself in your own home, stay independent and have the freedom to get around, don't wait to take charge of your own health. Even if you feel 'fine' today, taking charge can slow or prevent many age-related problems that can appear tomorrow.

Don't Wait!

You can age passively, not giving much thought to the changes you experience, or age actively. Aging actively means making healthy choices and taking good care of yourself.

Fortunately, no matter what your current habits are, it's never too late to start a healthy lifestyle and experience its benefits. Improving your health today can preserve your independence tomorrow.



Feel Your Best

- Keep Moving! Physical activity protects and improves your emotional, mental and physical health. It also reduces stiffness and arthritis pain.
- Keep Connected! Staying in touch with friends and family significantly increases brain functioning and helps maintain mental health.
- Keep Informed! Play an active part in your health care decisions and make an effort to learn about any health condition you might have. Don't be afraid to ask for help or more information.
- Stay Healthy! Avoid habits that accelerate aging such as smoking, eating foods high in sodium and fat and heavy alcohol use.

Get Started Today

Don't try to change your eating and activity habits all at once. Try one new activity or food a week.

- Keep your *Taking Charge* tip sheets handy for more information.
- Try not to eat out of boredom or frustration. If you can, do something outside or keep your hands busy with a hobby so you are not tempted to snack.
- Keep healthy snacks with you when away from home.
- Drink plenty of water. It will make you feel better and less tired. Water lubricates joints and prevents constipation. Have a drink of water about every hour.
- Keep your house well lit, remove clutter and make sure handrails are sturdy.
- Read food labels. Choose foods low in fat, cholesterol, salt and added sugar.
- Keep up-to-date with health screenings and regular doctor visits.
- Participate in community health screenings. They are often low cost or free.

Taking Charge of Your Eating Habits

Did You Know?

Good nutrition helps prevent and manage health conditions such as diabetes, hypertension and some types of cancer. Adults who practice good nutrition may live longer, have better heart and bone health and higher energy levels. You can avoid overeating by choosing foods naturally high in vitamins and minerals such as vegetables, fruits, whole grains and lean meats.



Taking Charge

If you answer 'yes' to any of the following questions, you may want to think about changing your eating habits.

- Do you eat 'comfort foods' when you feel anxious or sad? Do you overload on sweets and snacks at family gatherings and social events?
- Do you snack while watching television? It's easy to overeat when your attention is focused on something else.
- Do you eat snacks or other food straight from its packaging? The larger the package, the more food you eat at one time.

Common Dinner Table Myths

- *"Restaurant food is served at the recommended portion size"*
Portion sizes have grown over the past 20 years. The amount of food served for one person today can be enough to feed two. A fast food double patty cheeseburger, extra large fries and 24 oz. soft drink has 1500 calories, the equivalent of the amount of energy needed to run for 2 ½ hours.
- *"If I want to lose weight, I can just go on a diet for a few weeks and then go back to eating whatever I want to."*
Your body burns calories at a slower rate after you lose weight, so you gain weight back if you revert back your old eating habits. If you make healthy eating choices and physical activity permanent parts of your daily life, you can achieve (and stay) at your ideal weight.

Tips for Maintaining a Healthy Weight

- Make less food look like more by serving your meal on a salad or dessert plate.
- Eat less! Use teaspoons and salad forks to take smaller bites.
- When eating out, share an entrée and/or a dessert. This saves money and calories.
- Eat less by eating slowly. Pay attention to the flavors in every bite, and enjoy the simple pleasure of nutritious food.
- When possible, choose fresh foods over packaged foods.
- Eat a rainbow of foods. The colors naturally found in many vegetables and fruits are actually health-promoting compounds that may help prevent cancer.



Serving Sizes, Plain and Simple

- Three ounces (one serving) of cooked meat = a deck of cards
- ½ cup cooked cereal, pasta or rice = a computer mouse
- One pancake or waffle = a music CD
- One and a half ounces of cheese = three dice
- ½ cup of ice cream = ½ baseball
- 1 tsp. margarine = one dice

Find Out More

- Create a customized food plan designed especially for you by visiting www.mypyramid.gov or calling 888-7-PYRAMID.
- Calculate your fruit and vegetable needs and find fresh and easy recipes at www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov.
- Take a fun and eye-opening "Portion Distortion" quiz from the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute at www.hp2010.nhlbihin.net/oei_ss/menu.htm.
- Take a nutrition quiz and a virtual grocery store tour to help you read food labels at www.everydaychoices.org/tools.html.
- Check to see if you are eligible for the West Virginia Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program, which can provide vouchers to purchase fruits and vegetables at your local farmers market. Call the West Virginia Department of Agriculture at 304-558-2210 for more information.

Making Exercise Fun and Easy

Did You Know?

Whatever your age or activity level, you can always benefit from regular exercise. If you want to feel better, sleep better and stay independent as long as possible, it's time to get moving. Regular physical activity can:

- Strengthen heart tissue and lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels. People who exercise may have lower risk of heart attacks and strokes.
- Help control symptoms of diabetes, arthritis, osteoporosis and back pain.
- Improve your mood. Physical activity has been shown to effect brain chemistry the same way many anti-depressants do.
- Increase flexibility and balance. Physical activity reduces joint stiffness, making daily living (like carrying groceries and getting dressed) easier.

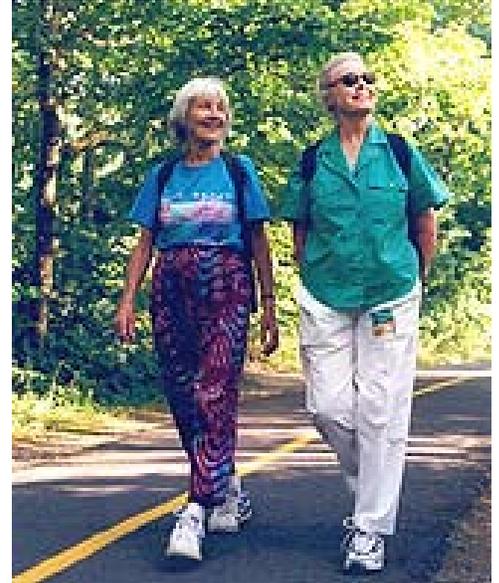


Common Exercise Excuses

- *"I'm not trying to impress anyone. I don't need to keep my muscles strong."*
Stronger muscles mean stronger bones that reduce risk of bone fractures. Lifting weights just two or three times a week can build bone mass. Lifting hand weights can boost your metabolism by as much as 15%, which helps with weight control.
- *"I don't have the energy or motivation for exercising."*
Once you get started, physical activity will increase your energy level. Schedule physical activity for times in the day or week when you feel energetic. If you need motivation to walk, consider getting a dog (or volunteering to walk a neighbor's) or ask a friend or family member to walk with you.
- *"I can't do strength training because I don't have the space or the money for a bunch of weight equipment"*
Strengthening exercises can be as simple as lifting a can of beans, a two pound hand weight or using stretch bands. Many strength exercises can be done in any chair.

Tips for Making Exercise Fun and Easy

- If you like to walk, swim, bike, or simply do exercises in your living room, ask a friend or neighbor to join you. It's a great way to spend time and catch up with friends and family. Time flies when you're having fun!
- Aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate activity on most days of the week. Activity can be done in short 10 minute periods throughout the day.
- Select activities that you ENJOY and can fit into YOUR day. If you can't get outside, do exercises while you watch a movie or a favorite television show.
- Schedule physical activity for times in the day or week when you feel energetic.
- Don't worry if you miss a day or two; just try to get back on track as soon as possible.
- Don't forget your chores! Gardening, raking leaves, mowing the lawn, playing with your grandkids and even household cleaning are all things that count as exercise.
- Reward yourself! If you reach your goal, like losing weight, write yourself a thank you note and put it on your refrigerator, or buy yourself a new pair of walking shoes.



Find Out More

- Find motivation and resources at the Lifelong Fitness Alliance by visiting www.50plus.org or calling 650-361-8282.
- Take a physical activity quiz, rate your weight, and use the ClubPed walking tool at www.everydaychoices.org/tools.html.
- View demonstrations of simple strength and balance exercises you can do at home *Strength Training for Older Adults* www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/physical/growing_stronger/index.htm.
- Locate an exercise facility with programs for older adults at *Active Options* www.activeoptions.org
- Find a scenic rail trail near you by visiting the West Virginia Rail Trail Conservancy at www.wvrtc.org.
- Check with your County Extension Service to find group exercise opportunities in your community. Call 304-293-2694 or visit www.wvu.edu/~exten.

Taking Charge of Falls

Did You Know?

Slips and falls can easily be prevented. Keeping hallways and stairwells free of clutter, as well as removing loose throw rugs and exposed extension cords, are easy household modifications. Installing secure handrails and light fixtures to keep hallways and stairs well lit are other simple ways that you can prevent a fall. Be aware of medications and medical conditions that cause dizziness.



Take Charge!

If you answer 'yes' to any of the following questions, you may want to look at ways to reduce your risk of a fall.

- Do you feel unsteady when going up and down stairs or when using a stepladder or a stool? Simple exercises that improve balance may be helpful.
- Do you avoid going to the upstairs or the basement of your home? Install sturdy handrails for all indoor and outdoor stairs.
- Do you need assistance in the bathroom? It's never a bad idea to install grab bars for showers, tubs, and toilets.
- Do you sometimes lose your footing? Consider wearing shoes with good support and non-slip soles.
- Do you use a chair instead of a ladder to change light bulbs or when reaching for things? Using a ladder properly can reduce your risk of a fall.
- Are you taking medications or over-the-counter products that might cause dizziness? Talk to your doctor to help diagnose the cause of your dizziness.

Tips for Fall Prevention

Make sure stairways, hallways and walkways are brightly lit and free of tripping hazards such as extension cords, clutter and pets.

- Get up slowly from lying down or when standing up from a chair.
- Secure all throw rugs, bathmats and plastic bathtub mats to the floor with nonskid backing or use double sided tape.
- Ask for help when changing light bulbs or when reaching for hard to reach objects. Keep items you use often within reach.
- Don't take risks! Ask yourself, "What if?"
- Make sure outdoor walkways are in good repair and free of ice and snow.
- Have your eyes checked annually and wear glasses as prescribed. Your eyesight may change as you age.



Find Out More

- Learn the basics of fall prevention from the Fall Prevention Center for Excellence. Visit www.stopfalls.org/basics for more information.
- Read "*Guidelines for Preventing Falls in Older Persons*" from the American Geriatrics Society at www.americangeriatrics.org/products/positionpapers/Falls.pdf
- Visit the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control at www.cdc.gov/ncipc/duip/spotlite/falls to find answers to frequently asked questions.
- Watch the video *How to Stay Safe and Independent in your Home: Fall Prevention for Seniors*. If your local library doesn't have it, you can purchase it at www.Amazon.com.
- Visit your Senior Center for resources on home safety.

