

How to overcome physical activity barriers associated with arthritis

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Barrier	Strategy to implement
Painful or stiff joints or muscles before physical activity	Modifications can be implemented so that pain does not occur during exercise. Knees and hips are often painful if exercises are not performed safely and properly. Movements that are “good” for the joints can be very helpful.
Painful or stiff joints or muscles during or after physical activity	Employ the two-hour joint pain rule: If pain lasts longer than two hours after working out, modify the activity. However, any pain during exercise could indicate problems to the joint; consider modifying the activity. Soreness (pain) in the muscles is normal after muscles have been exercised.
Lack of time	Monitor daily activities for one week. Identify at least three 10-minute time slots for physical activity. Add physical activity to the daily routine. Walk or ride a bike to work or shopping, walk the dog, exercise while watching TV, park farther away from your destination, etc.
Social influence	Explain your interest in physical activity to friends and family. Ask them to support your efforts. Invite friends and family members to exercise with you. Plan social activities involving exercise. Develop new friendships with physically active people. Join a group, such as the YMCA.
Lack of energy	Schedule physical activity for times in the day or week when you feel energetic. Convince yourself that if you give it a chance, physical activity will increase your energy level; then, try it.
Lack of motivation	Plan ahead. Make physical activity a regular part of your daily or weekly schedule and write it on your calendar. Invite a friend to exercise with you on a regular basis and write it on both your calendars. Join an exercise group or class, preferably a class that accommodates the needs of people with arthritis.
Fear of injury	Learn how to warm up and cool down to prevent injury. Learn how to exercise appropriately considering your fitness level, skill level and health status. Choose activities involving minimum risk.
Lack of skill	Meet with people who are knowledgeable about exercising with arthritis (activities may need to be modified). Take a class to develop new skills.

Barrier	Strategy to implement
Lack of resources	<p>Select activities that require minimal facilities or equipment such as walking.</p> <p>Identify inexpensive, convenient resources available in your community (community education programs, park and recreation programs, worksite programs, etc.).</p>
Weather conditions	<p>Develop a set of regular activities that are always available regardless of weather (indoor/outdoor walking or cycling, aerobic dance, calisthenics, etc.).</p>
Travel	<p>Wear supportive shoes and walk in the airport.</p> <p>Stay in places with swimming pools or exercise facilities.</p> <p>Join the YMCA or YWCA (ask about reciprocal membership agreement).</p> <p>Visit the local shopping mall and walk for a half-hour or more.</p> <p>Bring an MP3 player or iPod loaded with your favorite exercise music.</p>
Retirement years	<p>Look upon retirement as an opportunity to become more active instead of less. Spend more time gardening, walking the dog and playing with your grandchildren. Children with short legs and grandparents with slower gaits are often great walking partners.</p> <p>Learn a new skill you have always been interested in, such as ballroom dancing, square dancing or swimming.</p> <p>Now that you have the time, make regular physical activity a part of every day. Go for a walk every morning or every evening before dinner. Treat yourself to a stationary bike and ride every day while reading a favorite book or magazine.</p>

Adapted from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's "Overcoming Barriers to Physical Activity" (available at www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/everyone/getactive/barriers.html), by Dr. Julie J. Keysor, PT, and Aileen Ledingham, PT, Center for Enhancing Activity and Participation among Persons with Arthritis (ENACT) at Boston University.

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