

## LIVING WITH ARTHRITIS

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Arthritis affects many people in many different ways. No matter how it affects you, there are ways to make living with arthritis easier so you can continue to enjoy the activities you do every day.

Living a healthy lifestyle can help to reduce your pain and slow the progression of damage. Reach and maintain a healthy weight. Carrying extra weight puts pressure on all your joints and makes even simple tasks painful.

Choose nutritious foods to fuel your body and give you energy. Some foods rich in nutrients are also anti-inflammatory, which may reduce the amount of fluid around your joints. Talk to your healthcare provider if adding certain vitamins and supplements to your diet will also help your arthritis.

Continue to stay active. Increasing muscle strength with resistant exercises and increasing balance with flexibility exercises can help maintain or improve function in your joints. Strong muscles provide support to your joint, preventing damage and reducing your pain.

And get plenty of rest and relaxation. Your body needs time to heal and repair itself.

Whatever treatment or combination of treatments is best for you, commit to your plan. It may take some work and you may need to make small changes to your regular routine, but following your treatment plan is the best way to reduce your swelling, maintain your joint function and reduce your pain.

Meet with your healthcare provider on a regular basis to see if your treatment plan is working for you. If you find your pain increasing or the function in your joint decreasing, you may need to change part of your treatment plan. Work together with your healthcare provider to find the best treatment options for you.

As part of your treatment plan, your healthcare provider may recommend occupational therapy to help you find ways to continue to perform everyday tasks with less pain. Ask your occupational therapist about devices that can assist you when doing everyday tasks.

For example, a sock puller can help you put on socks, an everyday task you may not think much about doing until it is painful. Rails in the bathtub and shower can help you get in and out of the tub without putting as much pressure on your joints. And reach extenders can help you reach soup cans on a high shelf in your pantry without stretching your joints.

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Ask your healthcare provider or occupational therapist for more tips to help make everyday life easier for you.

*"I didn't have to stop any of the normal activities. I go walking – just put one foot in front the other and I'm fine."*

*"It's very important for me to be active, to keep my body in good shape to be able to enjoy my grandchildren."*