Exercises to keep you moving

It’s important to keep moving when you have arthritis. The exercises here will help you to stretch and strengthen your joints.

Remember to drink water while you’re exercising and make sure you have plenty of space around you to avoid injury.

It’s a good idea to start slowly and build up gradually if you’re new to exercise. Get advice and support from a healthcare professional or fitness instructor if you have any concerns about starting a new exercise plan.

Neck exercises

**Head turn**
It’s best to sit down for this exercise to help you balance. Turn your head towards one side, keeping your chin at the same height. Gently tense your neck muscles and hold for five seconds. Return your head to the centre and repeat on the opposite side. Repeat five times on each side.

**Head tilt**
It’s best to sit down for this exercise to help you balance. Tilt your head down towards your shoulder, leading with your ear. Gently tense your neck muscles and hold for five seconds. Return your head to the centre and repeat on the opposite side. Repeat five times on each side.

Hand and wrist exercises

**Hand lift**
Place your forearm on a flat surface, like a table, with your hand hanging over the edge, palm facing down. A rolled-up towel under your wrist might provide comfort. Keeping your fingers relaxed, move your hand upward until you feel a gentle stretch, then return to the starting position.

**Wrist turn**
Bend your elbow to 90 degrees with your palm facing down. Rotate your forearm, so that your palm faces up and then down. You can stand or sit to do this.

Shoulder and elbow exercises

**Elbow bend**
Stand up straight and lower your arm to one side. Bend your arm slowly upwards so your hand is touching your shoulder. Hold for 15-30 seconds. Repeat 10 times. This exercise can also be done with a light weight.

**Arm lifts**
Place your hands behind your head so your elbows are pointing to the sides and pressed back as far as you can. Hold for five seconds.

Then place your hands behind your back, again keeping your elbows pointing out and pressed back as far as you can. Hold for five seconds.

Do each movement five times.

Knee exercises

**Sit-to-stands**
Sit on a chair. Without using your hands for support, stand up and then sit back down. Make sure each movement is slow and controlled. Repeat until you can’t do any more. Rest for one minute then repeat another two times. If the chair is too low, start with rising from a cushion on the seat and remove when you don’t need it anymore.

**Straight-leg raise**
Sit back in your chair, with a straight back. Straighten and raise one of your legs. Hold for a slow count to 10, then slowly lower your leg. Repeat 10 times with each leg.

**Knee rolls**
Lie on your back with your knees bent and your feet together. Bring one knee up and use your hands to pull it gently towards your chest. Hold the leg in position for five seconds. Relax and repeat 10 times.

**Bridging**
Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor or bed. Lift your pelvis and lower back off the floor. Hold the position for five seconds and then lower down slowly.

**Squats**
Hold onto a chair or work surface for support. Squat down until your knee is directly over your big toe. Your knees should not go in front of your toes. Return to your normal standing position.

Repeat until you can’t do anymore, rest for one minute, then repeat another two times. As you improve, try to squat a little further, but don’t bend your knees beyond a right angle.

Foot and ankle exercises

**Wall push**
(a) Facing a wall, put both hands on the wall at shoulder height and place one foot in front of the other. The front foot should be around 30cm (12 inches) from the wall. With the front knee bent and the back knee straight, bend the front knee towards the wall, until the calf in your back leg feels tight. Relax and repeat 10 times.
(b) Repeat (a) but bring the back foot forward a little, so that the back knee is slightly bent. Repeat this 10 times.

**Ankle rotation**
Move your ankle around slowly in a circle. Do this 10 times one way, then repeat in the opposite direction.

**Knee rotate**
Move your ankle around slowly in a circle. Do this 10 times one way, then repeat in the opposite direction.