



ARTHRITIS TREATMENTS

Most arthritis pain can be managed well with the right treatments. Below are some of the most common treatments for arthritis.

- **Rest and recognizing limits:** Knowing your limits can help you manage joint pain. Knowing when to slow down or stop can help prevent flare-ups. And resting a painful, swollen joint can help it feel better.
- **Assistive devices:** Joints may need support to function safely. Devices such as braces, canes, and gripping tools can provide support for weakened joints. Shoe inserts may be used to take pressure off your joints when you walk.
- **Lifestyle changes:** These can be a big part of managing joint pain. If you are overweight, losing weight can take stress off your joints. Quitting smoking, exercising regularly, and eating a healthy diet can also improve the health of your joints.
- **Cold therapy (ice):** Icing a joint can ease pain and swelling. To safely ice a joint, follow these steps:
 - > Wet a thin towel with water (room temperature or slightly warmer).
 - > Wring out the excess water.
 - > Wrap the thin towel around an ice pack or a plastic bag of crushed ice.
- > Lie down and place the ice pack on the joint for 5–15 minutes. You can do this several times a day.
- **Note:** Don't put the ice pack directly on your skin. And never leave ice on for longer than 20 minutes.
- **Heat therapy:** Heat can relax tense muscles and reduce pain. (But it can also increase swelling. Avoid using heat on a joint if it is warm and swollen.)

To safely apply moist heat to a joint, follow these steps:

- > Wet a thin towel with water (room temperature or slightly warmer).
- > Wring out the excess water.
- > Microwave a hot pack or fill a hot water bottle with very hot water. Wrap the thin towel around it.
- > Lie down and place the hot pack on the joint for 15–20 minutes, several times a day.

Note: Don't put the hot pack directly on your skin or leave it on for longer than 20 minutes. Never lie on top of an electric heating pad or fall asleep with it.

- **Exercise:** Exercise is one of the best things you can do for your joints. It can ease joint pain and help keep your joints healthy. Exercises such as walking, cycling, swimming, and tai chi may be helpful. Talk to your

health care practitioner about an exercise program that will support your joint health.

- **Chiropractic:** Chiropractors use many methods to treat joints and surrounding tissues. These might include adjustments, ice or heat, electric stimulation to reduce pain and swelling, massage, and other hands-on treatments. They might also include a custom program of stretching, strengthening, and balance exercises.
- **Physical Therapy:** This can involve exercises, manual therapy, and modalities to ease pain and strengthen affected body regions.
- **Acupuncture:** This includes pain-easing and stress-calming techniques.
- **Massage Therapy:** This relieves muscle tension and lowers stress.
- **Nutritional Services:** This may involve working with a dietitian or nutritionist to identify and avoid dietary concerns.

- **Occupational Therapy:** This type of therapy can help you learn to do daily tasks with less stress on your joints.
- **Medicines:** There are a number of different medications, both over-the-counter and prescription, that may help to reduce pain and inflammation.
- **Surgery:** Surgery is usually a last resort for joint pain. There are many different surgical options. These range from replacement of one part of a joint to full joint replacement.
- **Naturopathic Services:** This includes using natural treatments like herbs, dietary changes, and gentle exercises.

For help with treating your arthritis, talk with your health care practitioner. He or she can help you understand which treatments would be helpful and which health care practitioners you may want as part of your health care team.

Ask your health care practitioner if there are any tests, referrals, or treatments that might be helpful to use along with your current treatment plan.

