

# Inflammatory Arthritis & Physical Activity –

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### How much Physical activity do people with arthritis need?

Physical activity should be considered across 4 domains:

**Aerobic exercise** – participating in any activity that uses the whole body like walking, cycling, swimming, dancing. People with arthritis should aim for 150 minutes of moderate intensity aerobic exercise or 75 minutes of vigorous intensity aerobic exercise or a combination of both across a week. It's also worth remembering that while this might seem a lot, particularly if you are not currently doing a lot of or any physical activity, that just engaging in any physical activity is better than none. Try sitting less or taking more standing up breaks if you sit all day at work. Park the car a little further back in the car park to get some more steps in and take the stairs if you can instead of the lift.

**Muscle strengthening exercises** – any activity that uses specific muscle groups and involves a loading effect such as gardening or lifting weights.

**Flexibility exercises** – these are exercises that stretch muscles like stretches, yoga poses as well as range of motion exercises to keep joints mobile.

**Balance exercises** – these are exercises that focus on balance and are important for anyone at risk of tripping or falling.



### Why should I engage in PA if I have arthritis?

Everyone benefits from being physically active. Studies show that people with arthritis who engage in regular physical activity, as is possible for their individual preferences and resources, helps their overall quality of life as well as helping build muscle strength, improving cardiorespiratory fitness, helping with maintaining a healthy body weight and improving mental health. The key is to find an activity or activities that you enjoy and can do regularly.

### How do I get started?

If you are starting exercise or want to get more physically active, talk to your doctor first to get a general health check and then work with your Chartered Physiotherapist who can work with you to design the right programme for you. The right programme for you is one that is designed to suit your preferences and capabilities and that changes over time as you progress.

### Summary points

- Physical activity and exercise are beneficial for people with inflammatory arthritis – rheumatoid arthritis, ankylosing spondylitis, Lupus (SLE), Juvenile Arthritis, Psoriatic Arthritis – as well as osteoarthritis
- Physical activity across the domains of cardiorespiratory fitness, muscle strength, flexibility and neuromotor performance are feasible and safe for people with arthritis
- Physiotherapists are competent [trained] in the assessment and prescription of exercise and physical activity for all patient groups including arthritis
- Behaviour change techniques are central to the design of any physical activity programme to help with motivation and long term engagement and staying physically active

### References:

- 2018 EULAR recommendations for physical activity in people with inflammatory arthritis and osteoarthritis | Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases (bmj.com)
- Physical Activity for Arthritis | CDC
- Physical activity | Arthritis Ireland
- Arthritis and physical activity - HSE.ie