

Arthritis Answers Podcast #2

Get Ready to Move with Arthritis: Things to Know Before You Lace Up Your Sneakers

Karen: Welcome to the *Arthritis Answers* podcast! *Arthritis Answers* is presented as part of the “*Interact with ENACT*” series from Boston University’s ENACT, which stands for Center for Enhancing Activity and Participation among Persons with Arthritis. Make sure to subscribe to our podcast series so that you can receive episodes as it’s produced, and please check out our first podcast called Top Ten Reasons to Exercise with Arthritis. I’m Karen Jacobs, I’m a Clinical Professor of Occupational Therapy at Boston University, and I’m here today with Sara Crandall, a candidate for a Doctorate of Physical Therapy degree at Boston University. And we’re here to bring you a podcast about getting started exercising.

Karen: So Sara, why is this topic important?

Sara: Many people with arthritis have difficulty exercising because of pain or uncertainty about what to do. Getting started can be very challenging, but it doesn’t have to be that way. The key to exercising with arthritis is to do the right exercise for you, in the right way, at the right time.

Karen: Wow, and that sounds so easy. So let’s get started! Many people with arthritis have other chronic health conditions. If you aren’t sure how your other conditions will affect your ability to exercise, Sara, what should you do?

Sara: When people have multiple conditions, there may be a few more things to think about. People with certain heart or lung problems may need special monitoring or may have restrictions. People with other conditions, such as osteoporosis or diabetes, may require some exercise modifications and education. If you’re not sure how to exercise with the condition you have, talk to your doctor. They may give you advice, recommend an exercise test, or refer you to physical therapy. A physical therapist or other health care provider could help you develop a safe and effective program for your body if you are affected by multiple conditions.

Karen: Sara that’s so important. And let’s say you’re clear to exercise and ready to go, and really motivated. What should you wear when exercising? Particularly, what kind of shoes are good for people with arthritis?

Sara: Well simply put, wear what you feel comfortable in for clothing. You don't need specific 'gym clothes' unless you really want them. Loose-fitting, breathable clothing can make you feel cooler when exercising. And while clothing is based on preference, good shoes are essential for exercise. The right shoes can prevent foot, knee, and hip pain. Shoes should have cushioning, laces, and should always have a back. They should fit well, and should be replaced when the soles start to show signs of wear. A good pair of sneakers usually meets the criteria, but some other types of shoes can also offer you the support you need. We'll include a detailed guide to footwear in our show notes if you're interested in more information. If you're having consistent foot pain or have a unique foot shape, you may want to discuss insoles or orthotics with your doctor. Shoe inserts haven't been proven to be consistently effective. However, experts recommend that certain people, or more specifically, certain feet, may benefit from them. Whether or not insoles will help you depends on your type of arthritis, joints and areas of the joints affected, and your foot type.

Karen: Sara, that was really interesting information. I learned quite a bit from what you just said. But what about pain? Many people with arthritis have pain... will exercise make the pain worse?

Sara: The right amount and type of exercise shouldn't cause joint pain. If you're starting a new exercise program, you might have slight pain or discomfort. But listen to your body. If you feel that your muscles are a little achy after or during exercise, that's good... you're working them out to make them stronger! If your joints hurt several hours later in the day, or into the next day, that's a different story. You may need to decrease the intensity of activity that you're doing. Next time, try doing less in one session, doing different exercises, or pacing your activities. Pacing can include breaking exercise into small periods of time over the day, or adding rest breaks between exercises. You can also alternate standing and seated exercises. The bottom line is that exercise shouldn't hurt your joints; so if it does, slow it down or change it up. If you've tried your best to make changes and it still hurts, it's time to talk to your doctor or other health professional. Don't stop exercising because of pain; find a way to exercise without pain!

Karen: I like that... find a way to exercise without pain. Now how can you track your exercise?

Sara: Okay so in terms of monitoring yourself, there are a few great options. Exercise logs can be very helpful to see your progress over time. We'll include

links in the show notes so that you can have logs to print out, or websites you can use to track your progress online. For the more tech-savvy people out there, there are also a lot of apps that you can use to track exercise now. If you like to walk, a pedometer is a great tool. Pedometers tell you how many steps you've taken. They are inexpensive and they can be found at most sporting goods stores as well as some grocery stores and pharmacies. A good goal for using a pedometer is to aim for 3000 steps in 30 minutes. You can also think of this as 100 steps per minute if you are walking for less than 30 minutes. This is important because counting the steps per minute makes sure that you're exercising at a good intensity. If you're not getting up to the optimal step count, try walking a little faster. The best way to use a pedometer is to put it on for exercise and check your steps when you're done and see how much time you've been exercising. Using a pedometer all day may overestimate the your exercise because it counts steps taken at low intensities or for very short periods of time.

Karen: Sara, that's really interesting, because I actually have worn a pedometer and now I'll be able to wear it in a correct way. And what if someone is having trouble meeting the guidelines... Should they give up?

Sara: Absolutely not! Any exercise you do is better than no exercise. So don't feel overwhelmed by the guidelines. Research has shown that as you increase time spent doing physical activity, day-to-day functioning improves at a similar rate. If you aren't able meet the guidelines, still try to be as active as possible. If you currently don't do any exercise, even 10 minutes several times a week will significantly benefit your health. For anyone, any amount of exercise you do will help. A wise motto to follow is: some is good, more is better. Next time, we'll lead you through the guidelines for exercise for people with arthritis. You can learn about the differences between aerobic, flexibility, and strength exercise.

Sara: So hopefully we've given you some good ideas of what to think about when starting an exercise program. Are you ready to get started? In our show notes for today, we'll have links to some arthritis-friendly exercise programs, as well as other resources to get started.

Karen: Sara thank you, for a very informative podcast. I really love that wise motto... 'some is good, more is better.' And I want to thank everyone for joining us! If you'd like to give us feedback, ask questions, or let us know of a topic that you're interested in, please send an email to enact (e-n-a-c-t) @

bu.edu. Our website is- www.bu.edu/enact. On our website, we'll have a have a copy of the show notes, information about the center, and a list of online resources. We hope you'll join us again, in our next podcast, where we'll be breaking down the guidelines for exercise with arthritis. Check back soon to find out what type of exercise and how much to do. Until then, stay active!