

Osteoarthritis is caused by the erosion of cartilage within the joints. Without the cushioning that cartilage provides, bones can come into contact with each other causing discomfort, pain, and weakness in the affected joints. The condition makes it painful (or impossible) to accomplish simple daily tasks such as buttoning up clothing, opening jars, and using a computer. Osteoarthritis affects people of all ages.

Exercises for Relief

Exercise is one of the most effective treatments in the management of arthritis. If you live with arthritic hands, below are hand exercises to help alleviate some of the symptoms you may be experiencing. As with any exercise, consistency is the key. If you experience pain while performing exercises, stop immediately and consult a professional.



With one arm extended out in front of you, place the other hand on top and gently apply enough pressure to bend the wrist downward. Hold for 30 seconds and release. Repeat up to three sets once a day per hand. Turn wrist towards the small finger to increase the stretch.



With a small ball in your hand, tighten grip as hard as possible without pain. Hold for three seconds. Slowly release grip. Repeat up to five sets once a day per hand. Alternatively, you can squeeze and release the ball quickly (pumping motion) for a variation on the first exercise or if experiencing swelling.



Touch the base of each finger with your thumb. Relax your hand. Repeat up to five sets once a day per hand.



Therapeutic Approaches to Relief

No single therapy, or combination of therapies, works for everyone living with arthritis. Each person is unique. Determining which therapeutic approach is right for you isn't always straightforward, as many healthcare practitioners use techniques that can help osteoarthritis sufferers.

Outlined below are three important approaches to consider and information about their approach to osteoarthritis.

Chiropractic

Chiropractic is a healthcare profession that focuses on the diagnosis and treatment of neuromuscular skeletal conditions and the effects that these conditions have on overall health and wellbeing.

For treatment of osteoarthritis, chiropractic care aims to decrease the occurrence of arthritic flare-ups, minimize inflammation, and improve range of motion through trigger-point therapy, active release techniques, joint mobilization, extremity adjustments, and more. Treatments are customized to each individual.

Naturopathy

Naturopathic medicine is a distinct branch of primary healthcare that focuses on treating the root cause of illness and disease by stimulating the healing power of the body.

Arthritis sufferers experience painful inflammation within the joints. In healthy individuals, an inflammatory response is a natural way for the body to fight off an acute illness such as a cold or fever. It is a natural response produced by our immune system to keep us healthy. With arthritis, inflammation is chronic and causes damage to our bodies.

Naturopathic doctors work to find the root cause of the inflammation. By assessing the arthritis sufferer's lifestyle, naturopaths determine what lifestyle changes can be made to help alleviate inflammation. This can be a combination of dietary changes, supplements, acupuncture, and exercise therapy.

Physiotherapy

Physiotherapy is a healthcare discipline which specializes in the assessment, treatment, and maintenance of movement and function.

Along with reducing chronic inflammation, specific physical treatments may help reduce the pain of arthritis. Physiotherapists use physical means and agents to assist in restoration of functional movement. This can include the use of hot and/or cold packs, ultrasound treatments, exercise therapy, and physiotherapy-assisted mobilizing and stretching.

Registered Massage Therapy

Registered massage therapy is a healthcare modality that assesses and treats musculature issues with the aim of reducing pain, improving range of motion, and reducing stiffness.

Registered massage therapists (RMTs) take a therapeutic approach to massage. By addressing specific points on the body, RMTs help alleviate the physical symptoms associated with arthritis. RMTs work to reduce tension in the body, loosen affected joints, and improve blood flow to the affected area. This is accomplished through a combination of massage techniques that are specific to the individual.

If you live with arthritis, our Collaborative Care Centre practitioners can help. Contact us at 613-253-2112 to book an appointment.

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