



Take Control: Assess Your Joints for Arthritis Risk

What's Your Risk?

- 1) Are you 45 years of age or older?
- 2) Have you ever had an injury to your knee severe enough to put you in bed; to force you to use a cane, crutch, or brace; or to require surgery?
- 3) Are you more than 10 pounds overweight?
- 4) Have you in the past, or do you currently, participate in greater than 3 hours per day of heavy physical activities, such as bending, lifting, or carrying items?
- 5) Did you have hip problems that caused you to limp as a child?

What Are Your Symptoms?

- 6) Has a doctor ever told you that you have arthritis?
- 7) During the past 12 months, have you had pain, aching, stiffness, or swelling in or around a joint?
- 8) In a typical month, were these symptoms present daily for at least half of the days in the month?
- 9) Do you have pain in your knee or hip when climbing stairs or walking 2-3 blocks (1/4 mile) on flat ground?
- 10) Do you have daily pain or stiffness in your hand joints?
- 11) Are you now limited in any way in any activities because of joint symptoms (pain, aching, stiffness, loss of motion)?
- 12) Because of joint symptoms, rate your ability to do the following and then add the numbers shown next to each of your answers.

0-Without ANY Difficulty 1-With SOME Difficulty, 2-With MUCH Difficulty, 3-UNABLE to Do

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| a. Dress yourself, including shoelaces and buttons? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Stand up from an armless, straight chair? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. Get in and out of a car? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. Open a car door? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| TOTAL: | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- If you answered **YES** to **ANY** of Questions 1-5, you are **AT RISK** for Arthritis.
- If you answered **YES** to **TWO** or **MORE** of Questions 6-11, you might have **Symptoms** of Arthritis.
- If you scored a **6 OR MORE** on Question 12, Please contact your doctor immediately.

ARTHRITIS: Managing Your Pain



Dealing with pain can be the hardest part of having arthritis or a related condition, but you can learn to manage it and its impact on your life.

Causes of Pain: Arthritis pain is caused by several factors, such as:

- Inflammation, the process that causes the redness and swelling in your joints;
- Damage to joint tissues, which results from the disease process or from stress, injury, or pressure on the joints;
- Fatigue that results from the disease process, which can make your pain seem worse and harder to handle;
- Depression or stress, which results from limited movement or no longer doing activities you enjoy.

Take Control: Arthritis may limit some of the things you can do, but it doesn't have to control your life. One way to reduce your pain is to build your life around wellness, not pain or sickness. Your mind plays an important role in how you feel pain and respond to illness. Thinking of pain as a signal to take positive action rather than an ordeal you have to endure can help you learn to manage your pain. You can do this by:

- Thinking positive thoughts,
- Having a sense of humor,
- Eating a balanced diet,
- Exercising regularly,
- Enjoying activities with friends and family.

It also means following your treatment plan, taking your medication properly, and practicing relaxation.

Exercise Regularly: Through exercise, you can improve your overall health and fitness, as well as your arthritis symptoms. Regular appropriate exercise can help you manage pain, as well as keep joints moving, strengthen muscles around joints, increase energy, improve sleep, control weight, and strengthen your heart. A physical therapist, occupational therapist, exercise physiologist, or doctor can recommend an exercise program for you.

Protect Your Joints: Take care to do everyday tasks in ways that reduce stress on painful joints. Pay attention to your body for signals that it needs rest. Pace yourself by balancing activity with rest. Avoid activities that hurt your joints. Use your largest and strongest joints and muscles whenever possible.

Use Heat and Cold: Using heat and cold treatments can reduce the pain and stiffness of arthritis. Cold packs numb the sore area and reduce inflammation and swelling. They are especially good for joint pain caused by a flare. Heat relaxes your muscles and stimulates blood circulation.

Get Enough Sleep: Sleep restores your energy so that you can better manage pain. It also rests your joints to reduce pain and swelling. Most people need 7 to 9 hours of sleep per night. If you feel tired and achy after lunch every day, taking a brief nap (15 to 20 minutes) can help restore your energy and spirits. If you have trouble sleeping at night, try relaxing quietly in the afternoon rather than taking a nap.

Consider Massage: Massage brings warmth and relaxation to the painful area. You can massage your own muscles or ask your doctor to recommend a professional who is trained to give massages.

Practice Relaxation: People who are in pain experience both physical and emotional stress. Pain and stress have similar effects on the body; muscles tighten, breathing becomes fast and shallow, and heart rate and blood pressure go up. Relaxation can help you reverse these effects and give you a sense of control and well-being that makes it easier to manage pain. Relaxation involves learning ways to calm and control your body and mind. There is no best way to learn how to relax, as long as you relax both your body and mind.

Excerpted from the Arthritis Foundation brochure on Managing Your Pain available at www.arthritis.org.