

Physical Activity for PsA



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center

Physical activity plays an important role in overall well-being. If you have psoriatic arthritis, moderate exercise may offer specific benefits, including improved range of motion, reduced joint pain and stiffness, increased flexibility and weight loss. This guide offers education on the importance of physical activity and tips to adding physical activity into your daily routine.

Regular physical activity is one of the most important things you can do to improve your health, especially if you have a chronic disease. Living with psoriatic arthritis can be challenging, but physical activity can help you take control of your life and can help you to manage psoriatic arthritis symptoms.

Physical activity may help you to¹:

- Have more energy to do things that you want to do
- Live longer
- Lower your risk for many different diseases
- Improve how your brain works
- Feel happier and reduce anxiety and depression
- Sleep better at night
- Improve your quality of life
- Improve bone health
- Improve balance and lower the risk of falls
- Reach or keep a healthy weight

Physical activity for psoriatic arthritis:

- Reduce inflammation and pain
- Strengthen muscle around joints and lessen pressure on joints
- Improve flexibility in joints and tendons
- Maintain the ability to do daily activities
- Lower risk for comorbidities

A closer look at comorbidities

People with psoriatic arthritis can develop stiff joints and muscle weakness. But you can also be at a higher risk of developing comorbidities. A comorbidity is a disease or condition that occurs because of or is related to a health condition you have, such as psoriatic arthritis. By treating your psoriatic arthritis and making healthy lifestyle changes, you can reduce your risk for these related health conditions²:

- Heart disease
- Metabolic syndrome
- Obesity
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Anxiety and depression
- Certain types of cancer
- Type 2 diabetes

Physical activity recommendations for adults

Regardless of your current physical activity level, it's important to move more and sit less.

To get the most health benefits, adults should get 150 minutes (2.5 hours) each week of physical activity that gets you breathing harder and your heart beating faster. You do not have to do all 150 minutes at once; spread out your physical activity throughout the week.¹

If you are not able to be active for the recommended amount of time, do what you can. Any physical activity is better than none.

Recommendations for adults with psoriatic arthritis

Before you start any physical activity, talk with your health care provider or rheumatologist to discuss if physical activity is safe for you.

It's recommended that people living with psoriatic arthritis try low-impact exercise (walking, yoga and swimming) instead of high-impact exercise (running).³

Your body may benefit from doing various forms of physical activity including stretching, aerobic and muscle strengthening activities.

Physical activity vs. exercise

Sometimes the word "exercise" can bring up feelings of guilt or dread. Maybe you do not enjoy exercising or you have not exercised in a while. Exercise, which is a set of physical activities that is planned, structured and repetitive, can be difficult. You may not have time to go to a swimming pool to swim. You may not have a gym membership to enroll in a dance or yoga class. You may not be comfortable with how your body looks or feels when you are wearing exercise clothes in public. You may find it boring to ride a stationary bike that does not go anywhere. These can be real barriers to exercise.

But what if we think about "physical activity" instead of "exercise?" Physical activity is defined as bodily movement that requires energy. There may be simple activities that you can do that count as physical activity including:

- Taking the stairs instead of the elevator
- Parking a little further from where you are going
- Taking a short break to stretch or walk
- Vacuuming, sweeping or mopping
- Playing with your children or grandchildren at a park
- Raking leaves and gardening

You may notice that you already do some of these activities. By adding a little more to the physical activity you already do, you may notice some health benefits.

Exercise options

However, some people like exercise. They like setting aside 20-30 minutes to go for a run or participate in an exercise class. They may like that exercise is different than the activities they do in a regular day. If you enjoy exercising, here are some options that may be good options for your psoriatic arthritis:



Walking helps you build strength and keep flexibility in your joints. You may also try water walking, which is walking in waist-deep water. Walking in water can reduce the weight on joints compared to walking on land.

Yoga uses controlled movements, stretching and deep-breathing relaxation, all of which helps relax stiff muscles, ease sore joints and improve range of motion.

Tai chi is a gentle martial arts exercise that is found to be effective for chronic pain in people living with osteoarthritis.⁴ Tai chi can also reduce stress, anxiety and depression.



Swimming and water aerobics ease stiff joints and relax sore muscles. Water activities are no-impact ways to build strength and flexibility because the water helps support the body while you move your joints. Swimming and other water exercises can help strengthen the back, shoulders and hips while providing a good cardiovascular workout, getting that heart rate up easily and painlessly.

Cycling is a good option because it is not as hard on the joints especially if you use a recumbent bicycle.

Weight training can help to keep or build muscle strength. It's recommended to use light weights instead of heavy weights.

Getting started

It can be difficult to start a new physical activity or exercise. Here are some tips to make the first step easier:

- Start exercising for small amounts of time, for example, 10 minutes per day. Slowly build up to 30 minutes per day.
- Schedule your physical activity for times of the day when you have the most energy.
- Try an activity that you enjoy and that you look forward to doing.
- Think of two or three different physical activities that you can do throughout the week.
- Invite your friends or family members to exercise with you.
- Think about the health benefits you're gaining when you're exercising.
- Give yourself a day or two to recover after your workout.

Making exercise more comfortable

Add a warm-up and cool-down to any of your exercises. Stretching can prevent the chance of injury.

If you walk but feel uneasy or unbalanced, try walking with a walking stick or on a treadmill with handrails.

Wearing supportive shoes can make physical activity more comfortable, especially if you have pain in your feet, legs or back. When you're shopping for new shoes, try wearing the shoes for at least 10 minutes in the store to get a sense of how they fit.

If you feel sore after exercising, using a heat pack and ice may help to relieve some pain. You can use a heat pack for five minutes to bring in healthy oxygenated blood, then switch to five minutes of ice to reduce inflammation. Do this for two or three cycles, always ending with ice.

Find an exercise class that is designed for people living with arthritis. Many YMCAs offer classes for those with arthritis. If a class isn't designed specifically for arthritis, you can still ask the instructor if there are any adjustments that you can do for your psoriatic arthritis.

You may also talk with a physical or occupational therapist or qualified fitness professional to help you create a physical activity plan that works for you.

Make sure you are safe

It may be normal to experience muscle soreness after your workout. However, if you feel uncomfortable soreness or pain, the physical activity may have been too hard. Let your body rest before continuing your activity at an easier pace.

Stop any activity that causes extreme pain or discomfort. Ignoring pain is not a good idea and may lead to injury, so always listen to your body. Talk with your health care provider if you experience pain.

References

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Work with a Patient Navigator

The NPF Patient Navigation Center (PNC) provides assistance to anyone impacted by psoriatic disease, including families and caregivers. Information provided by the PNC is for educational use only and does not replace medical care or advice.

You can reach our navigators by phone, text, email and chat Monday-Friday 7:30 am - 4:30 pm PST.

Call: **1-800-723-9166 (option 1)** | Text: **503-410-7766**

Email: **education@psoriasis.org** | Chat: **psoriasis.org/navigationcenter**

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