

Treatment and Management of Arthritis via Physiotherapy

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Introduction

Patients with arthritis can live a good quality of life if they are treated holistically with clinical care and physiotherapy. A physiotherapist discusses the role of physiotherapy in the management of arthritis on World Arthritis Day.

Treatment of arthritis

The type of arthritis and the severity of the pain will determine how it is treated. For the treatment of arthritis, there are five basic therapeutic procedures [1].

Change your way of life: The first and most basic step in controlling arthritis is to make a lifestyle modification, which is to maintain a healthy weight. The stress on the joints will be reduced as a result of this. It is especially crucial in weight-bearing joints such as the foot, hips, and knees. Weight management entails eating healthy meals, getting enough exercise, lowering physical, mental, and emotional stress, and getting enough sleep [2,3].

Exercise: The following types of exercise can help with arthritis management:

Low Intensity exercise: Walking at a normal pace, swimming, and water aerobics are all examples of this. Cycling, outdoor games, and mountain climbing are among other examples. Exercise improves the strength and flexibility of joint tissue, as well as reducing pain and weariness. While arthritis makes you more immobile, exercise makes you less immobile.

Stretching of the tightened structures: Stretching helps to lubricate the joints by moving the tissues around. It helps to retain movement that has been diminished as a result of arthritis. Warming up the muscles and tendons helps them become more flexible and less prone to damage. Stretching should be done slowly and softly, with the initial discomfort quickly giving way to a sense of well-being.

Muscle strengthening: Half squats, hamstring curls, calf raises, straight leg raise, side leg raise, dynamic quadriceps workouts, and prone hip extension are examples of muscle strengthening exercises. Arthritis pain and stiffness can be reduced with strength training. These are exercises that help you gain strength and endurance. They assist tonify muscles, maintain bone strength, and promote a healthier lifestyle by supporting restful sleep and weight regulation.

Balance and proprioception training: The ability to perceive your surroundings and move your body and limbs is known as proprioception. It's also known as kinesthesia, and it's crucial for everyday life. It entails the ability to physically perceive and react to changes in the environment, such as when the slope of the ground on which you are walking changes. Proprioception training promotes spatial awareness and balance. Sensory cells on nerve endings in muscles, tendons, joints, skin, and ears are known as proprioceptors. They deliver a signal to the brain in response to changes in the environment. The brain then directs the damaged organ to react in a specific way. Since arthritis impairs proprioception, such training can reduce the symptoms of arthritis [4,5].

Pain relief therapy: In addition to exercise, discomfort-relieving treatments can be used to alleviate pain. Interferential therapy (IFT), transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS), and ultrasound (US) therapy are examples of specialist treatments. Your physiotherapist will decide on the mode of pain-relieving therapy to be given, depending on your clinical symptoms and medical evaluation.

Cold and heat packs: These can be used separately or in conjunction. Your physiotherapist, once again, will be the best judge of how to proceed with this type of treatment.

Supportive devices, such as braces and shoe inserts, give support for inflamed joints while also reducing strain on them. They can be ordered based on your physiotherapist's recommendations.

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