

## Lesson 3 - Creating an exercise plan

In this lesson, we will focus on creating an exercise plan that is safe, effective, and tailored to your individual needs and abilities. You will learn about the importance of starting slowly, listening to your body, and gradually increasing the intensity and duration of your workouts.

Please read each section of this lesson carefully, and then when you are ready, take the **Lesson 3 Quiz** to test your new knowledge. The quiz is an interactive and printable PDF.



### Key points

1. Work with your health care provider or a physical therapist to develop an exercise plan that suits your specific condition, while considering your joints' limitations and overall fitness level.
2. Warm up before exercising by doing gentle range of motion exercises followed by low intensity aerobic exercise to increase blood flow to muscles.
3. Choose exercises that you enjoy and can be incorporated into your daily routine. This will help you continue and follow through with your exercise program.
4. Consider using aids such as walking poles, braces, or assistive devices to support your joints during exercise and reduce discomfort.



### Work with your health care provider or a physical therapist to create an exercise plan

It is important to work with your health care provider, physical therapist, or exercise professionals, such as kinesiologists, exercise physiologists and personal trainers, who have experience working with people with arthritis, before starting an exercise program; be open with them about how arthritis symptoms may affect your ability to participate in exercise. Other types of exercise specialists can also provide advice for people with arthritis, including exercise psychiatrists and occupational therapists. Talk to your doctor about the available options in your area.

These health care professionals can assess your individual needs, provide guidance on exercises that are safe and beneficial for you, and help tailor an exercise plan to your needs. They will consider things like how active your disease is, joint damage or limitations, and overall fitness level. By working with a health care professional, you can ensure that your exercise plan is safe, appropriate, effective, and customized to your abilities with a combination of aerobic, strength, mobility, and balance exercises.



## Warming up before exercising

Before starting any exercise session, it is essential to warm up your muscles and joints to improve performance. A warm-up routine typically includes controlled mobility exercises that target the specific joints and muscles you will be using during your workout. These exercises can increase blood flow to the muscles, improve flexibility, and loosen up the joints, making them more prepared for activity. Research has shown that warm-up exercises can improve joint mobility and decrease stiffness in individuals with arthritis.



## Choose exercises that you enjoy and can be incorporated into your daily routine

Selecting exercises that you enjoy and find engaging is important for long-term adherence to your exercise program. By choosing activities that you genuinely enjoy, you are more likely to stick with them over time, making exercise a regular part of your routine. It could be anything from swimming, dancing, gardening, or even participating in a group fitness class. Incorporating activities you find enjoyable into your daily routine ensures that exercise becomes a sustainable and enjoyable habit.



## Consider using aids to support your joints during exercise

Using aids or assistive devices can provide support and reduce discomfort during exercise for people with arthritis. Aids like walking poles or canes can help improve balance, reduce stress on joints, and provide stability during walking or hiking activities. Braces or splints can be used to support and stabilize specific joints affected by arthritis, such as wrist braces or knee sleeves. These aids help reduce pain and improve joint alignment during exercise. It is important to consult with your health care provider or a physical therapist to determine if and what type of assistive devices may be beneficial for you.

## Additional Learning Resources

- Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Adults: <https://csepguidelines.ca/guidelines/adults-18-64/>
- Arthritis Consumer Experts' 3 fab facts for happy joints: <https://bit.ly/ArthritisConsumerExperts3FabFacts>
- Arthritis Research Canada's 30-Day Exercise Challenge for Arthritis: <https://bit.ly/ArthritisResearchCanada30dayExerciseChallenge>
- National Health Service UK: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/>
- SMART goal setting: <https://bit.ly/SMARTGoalSettingUC>