

Lesson 6 - Monitoring and adapting your exercise program

In this lesson, we will discuss the importance of monitoring your exercise program and making necessary adaptations over time. You will understand that by regularly monitoring your progress and adjusting your routine, you can continue to reap the benefits of exercise while managing your arthritis. You will also understand the importance of working closely with your health care team to ensure that your exercise program remains safe and effective.

Please read each section of this lesson carefully, and then when you are ready, take the **Lesson 6 Quiz** to test your new knowledge. The quiz is an interactive and printable PDF.



Key points

1. Keep a journal to track your exercise sessions, noting the type of activity, duration, and any changes in symptoms or pain levels. This will help you identify patterns and make informed decisions about your exercise program.
2. Monitor your progress periodically with the help of your physical therapist or other health care provider. They can provide guidance to help you select and modify exercises.
3. Be flexible and adaptable. Your exercise routine may need adjustments based on your disease activity, well-being, and overall health.
4. Remember that self-care is key. Rest when needed, fill your plate with colourful and wholesome foods, and practice stress management techniques to support your overall well-being.



Keeping track of your exercise sessions

Keeping a journal to track your exercise sessions is an excellent way to monitor your progress and make informed decisions about your exercise program. Note down the type of activities you engage in, the duration of each session, and any changes in symptoms or pain levels you experience before, during, or after exercise. By tracking this information, you can identify patterns and understand which exercises work best for you and which ones make your symptoms worse. This knowledge allows you to make necessary adjustments and modifications to your routine, ensuring that you engage in activities that are most safe and beneficial. There are many wearable devices or online tools that can be helpful to track your exercise and symptoms. Please speak to your health care provider to help decide which tracking method best suits you.



Assess your progress periodically with the help of your health care provider

In Arthritis Consumer Experts' National Survey on Arthritis and Exercise, respondents reported wanting to have their health care providers engaged and invested in their physical activity. More than half reported that they would like to have their health care providers check in with them about exercise on a quarterly or monthly basis.¹

Regularly assessing your progress with the guidance of a health care professional experienced in arthritis care is important for the long-term success of your exercise program. Schedule periodic check-ins with your physical therapist or other health care provider to discuss your exercise routine, any changes in your symptoms, and your overall progress. They can provide valuable guidance to help you select and modify exercises. Further, they can demonstrate proper exercise techniques and increase exercise intensity gradually. Their expertise will help ensure that your exercise program remains effective and aligned with your specific needs, limitations, and goals.



Be adaptable and embrace a change in plans

Adaptability is key when managing arthritis through exercise. Your overall health, well-being, and disease activity may vary over time, necessitating adjustments to your exercise routine. Be open to making changes as needed. On days when your symptoms are more severe, you may need to engage in gentler, "low impact" activities or modify the intensity and duration of your exercises. Conversely, during periods of remission or when your symptoms are well-controlled, you may be able to challenge yourself with more demanding activities. By being adaptable, you can continue to engage in exercise in a way that benefits you.



Make modifications as necessary

It is essential to listen to your body and make modifications to your exercise routine as necessary. If certain exercises or activities aggravate your symptoms or cause discomfort, it's important to find alternative options that are better suited for your lifestyle.

Remember, everyone's exercise journey is unique, and finding the right modifications and alternatives can help you stay active and manage your disease effectively.



Self-care is very important

Exercise and physical activity are important components of self-care but should not replace adequate sleep or recovery. Rest when needed and listen to your body's signals such as fatigue or soreness. Taking care of your overall well-being will support participation in physical activity and exercise and contribute to better disease management long-term.

Being overweight is a major risk factor for many types of arthritis. So, consuming a healthy diet plays an important role in preventing arthritis and controlling symptoms after diagnosis. When choosing foods, go for a colourful diet. When possible, include fruits and vegetables as a part of every meal, half of your plate if possible. For more information, visit the **Food Guide Canada website**.

Additional Learning Resources

- Free Fitness Journal Templates in Google Docs:
<https://thegoodocs.com/freebies/fitness-journals/>
- How to Start a Fitness Journal: Tips, Templates, and Prompts:
<https://bit.ly/HowtoStartaFitnessJournal>
- Wearable Activity Trackers in the Management of Rheumatic Diseases:
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7506912/>
- NIH Exercise and Physical Activity Tracking Tools:
<https://bit.ly/NIHPhysicalActivityTrackingTool>
- How to track strength training: <https://jamesclear.com/workout-journal>

References

1. Arthritis Consumer Experts Survey Report on Arthritis and Exercise, 2022
<https://jointhehealth.org/programs-jhinsight-view.cfm?id=1281&locale=en-CA>