

## Lesson 4 - Exercise precautions and safety tips

In Lesson 4, we will discuss important precautions and safety tips to keep in mind while exercising with arthritis. When you complete this lesson, you will understand how you can minimize the risk of injury and optimize the benefits of exercise to better manage your disease.

Please read each section of this lesson carefully, and then when you are ready, take the **Lesson 4 Quiz** to test your new knowledge. The quiz is an interactive and printable PDF.



### Key points

1. Listen to your body and be aware of any pain or discomfort. If you experience severe or persistent pain, stop exercising and consult your health care provider.
2. Avoid activities that can increase stress on joints, increase risk of injury or worsen your arthritis symptoms such as contact sports like rugby, hockey, or soccer.
3. Use proper exercise techniques to avoid joint strain. If unsure, consider working with a qualified fitness professional or physical therapist.
4. Stay hydrated, wear appropriate footwear and clothing, and protect your joints with supportive braces or wraps when necessary.
5. Don't forget to cool down after exercising by performing gentle stretches to improve flexibility.



### Listening to your body

When engaging in exercise with arthritis, it is important to listen to your body and pay attention to any pain or discomfort that may arise. While some muscle soreness or mild joint discomfort can be expected, severe or persistent pain is a sign that you may be overexerting yourself or causing undue stress on your joints. If you experience such pain, it is important to stop exercising and consult your health care provider. They can help determine the cause of the pain and provide appropriate guidance to ensure your safety and well-being.

Rapid, uncontrolled movements or exercises with too much weight or range of motion can place excessive stress on your joints and potentially worsen your symptoms. Remember to move cautiously when you begin any new activity that you are unfamiliar

with. For instance, learn to do a slow and controlled body weight squat to ensure proper exercise form before increasing speed or adding weight. Activities like swimming, cycling, or using an elliptical machine can be an excellent way to build foundational fitness and movement patterns.



## Use proper techniques during exercise

Proper exercise techniques are essential to avoid joint strain and injury during exercise. It is important to maintain proper form and alignment to minimize stress on your joints. If you are unsure about the correct technique for a particular exercise, consider working with a qualified fitness professional or physical therapist who can provide guidance and ensure that you are performing the exercises correctly and safely. They can help you modify exercises to suit your specific needs and limitations.



## Other ways to reduce stress on joints and risk of injury

Staying hydrated is necessary during exercise to support overall health and joint function. Make sure to drink water before, during, and after your workout to prevent dehydration. Additionally, wearing appropriate footwear and clothing can enhance comfort and reduce the risk of injury. Choose shoes that provide good support and cushioning for your feet and wear comfortable, breathable clothing that allows for ease of movement. If needed, consider using supportive braces or wraps to provide extra joint stability and protect vulnerable joints during exercise. These aids also can help reduce discomfort and minimize the risk of injury. An experienced personal trainer, athletic therapist, or physical therapist can make recommendations on appropriate clothing, footwear, and training aids for exercise.



## Cooling down after exercise

After completing your exercise session, it is important to cool down properly. Cooling down allows your heart rate and breathing to return to normal gradually and prevents blood pooling in your extremities. One effective way to cool down is by performing gentle stretches that target the muscles and joints you worked during your workout. These stretches improve mobility and promote relaxation. It is important to focus on controlled movements and avoid bouncing or forcing your joints beyond their comfortable range of motion.

## Additional Learning Resources

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Physical Activity for Arthritis:  
<https://bit.ly/CDCPhysicalActivityforArthritis>
- HealthLinkBC Quick Tips: Exercising Safely With Arthritis:  
<https://bit.ly/HealthLinkBCExerciseSafelyWithArthritis>
- Patient education: Arthritis and Exercise (Beyond the Basics):  
<https://bit.ly/PatientEducationArthritisandExercise>
- JointHealth™ insight – Exercise and good nutrition:  
<https://bit.ly/JointHealthInsightExerciseandNutritionEN>