

Exercise A Pain Reliever For Arthritis

Researchers have found that exercise is a natural pain reliever for most people suffering from arthritis. A study, published in the April issue of Arthritis Care and Research, concluded that regular exercise is effective in significantly improving and managing arthritis pain.

The study looked at the effectiveness of the arthritis Foundation Exercise Program (www.arthritis.org), developed in 1987, to reduce pain and stiffness by keeping joints flexible and muscles strong. A total of 346 individuals with self-reported arthritis participated in a randomized controlled trial. The eight-week exercise program consisted of exercise twice weekly for one hour. Exercises included low-impact routines with gentle range-of-motion movements that were performed sitting or standing. Study participants had a mean age of 70 years (ranging from 32 to 94 years old). Key findings of the study include that participants reported a decrease in pain and fatigue, an increase in upper-and lower-extremity function, and an increase in strength after participating in the exercise program. "The study showed that the exercise program is suitable for every fitness level, even inactive older individuals," says author of the study Leigh Callahan. "Many people believe the myth that exercise exacerbates their symptoms. The truth revealed in the study is that symptoms improved with exercise."

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