

PRESCRIPTION

for health



OTHER TYPES OF EXERCISE

Stiffness and pain cause joints to be less flexible. Thus, exercise often is avoided. Maintain flexibility by using the joint. Also, do activities that stretch the muscles across the joint. Otherwise, unused muscles will shorten and limit range of motion.

- Do flexibility exercises every day.
- Do dynamic flexibility exercises for all major muscle groups. This increases their range of motion.
- Avoid overstretching.
- Yoga, pilates and Tai Chi help improve strength and flexibility. They also help you relax and reduce pain.

People with RA often have a low exercise capacity. However, even just a little exercise over a short time can cause big improvements. Use those improvements to motivate you to continue. The key is to begin your more active lifestyle.

SAMPLE EXERCISE PLAN

The calendar below will provide you with a sample workout plan that includes both aerobic and resistance exercise!

SUNDAY
Flexibility Training Walk for 30 Minutes
MONDAY
Flexibility Training Walk for 30 Minutes
TUESDAY
Flexibility Training 10 Push Ups x2 Plank for 30 Seconds x2 Wall-sits 30 Secondsx2 10 Dips x2
WEDNESDAY
Flexibility Training Walk for 30 Minutes
THURSDAY
Flexibility Training 10 Push Ups x2 Plank for 30 Seconds x2 Wall-sits 30 Secondsx2 10 Dips x2
FRIDAY
Flexibility Training Walk for 30 Minutes
SATURDAY
Flexibility Training Do Something Fun and Active Outside!



ABOUT US

The *Commit to Fit!* Prescription for Health Program is an evidence-based, best practice program that is designed to increase the practice of disease-specific physical activity and support linkages to community-based fitness and nutrition.

Commit to Fit! is a community-wide health behavior improvement initiative designed to promote the practice of healthy lifestyles in Genesee County by utilizing a common message and strategy that engages all residents. To facilitate improved health behaviors throughout the year, *Commit to Fit!* offers community-based classes as well as annual community-wide challenges centered around physical activity, nutrition, and overall wellness. *Commit to Fit!* is free to all those who live, learn, work, and play in Flint & Genesee County.

Commit to Fit! Prescription for Health materials adapted from the Exercise is Medicine Program (ACSM).



519 South Saginaw Street, Suite 306
Flint, Michigan 48502-1815
Business: 810-232-2228 • Fax: 810-232-3332
commit2fit@flint.org • commit2fit.com

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is a systemic autoimmune disease. It is characterized by inflammation of the membranes lining the joints. This causes pain, stiffness, warmth, swelling, and potential severe joint damage. Symptoms vary from day to day. Sudden increases in symptoms are called flares. These are common and can last for days or months. During flares, the lining of the joint capsule thickens and the joint swells. The progression of RA breaks down the cartilage and bone of affected joints. In severe cases, bones fuse together, resulting in more pain and deformity.

Osteoarthritis (OA) is a degenerative joint disease. Ongoing loss of cartilage causes joint pain and reduced range of motion. Risk factors for OA include: Old age (about 80 percent of adults over age 65 are affected), being female, overweight or obese. Previous injury, muscle weakness, and joint looseness are also risk factors. Weight-bearing joints, like knees and hips, are at greatest risk.

EXERCISE AND ARTHRITIS

Both RA and OA can lead to physical disability and reduced quality of life. Fortunately, regular exercise does not appear to increase symptoms or damage. Research shows that aerobic exercise is safe. It also improves aerobic capacity for those with stable RA. Resistance exercise also is recommended. Stretching and warm-up are key. Exercise also is best done several times per day. With OA, exercise can help by decreasing joint swelling and pain, and keeping your weight at a healthy level. This reduces pressure on your joints and improves cartilage and bone health.

INSIDE

- Aerobic Exercise Programs
- Resistance Exercise Programs



GETTING STARTED

- Talk with your doctor before you start an exercise program.
- Ask about any changes to your medications or concerns in becoming more active.
- Take all medicines prescribed by your doctor.
- Select low-impact and non-impact activities. Walking, swimming, water exercise, and cycling are good choices.
- A long warm-up and gradual cool-down may help you avoid additional joint pain.
- Divide your activity into many short sessions during the day. Try 3, 10 minute sessions to start. Set goals by time rather than distance.
- Start slowly. Over time, add to the intensity and length of your workouts. Take frequent breaks as needed. Adjust your workouts based on your symptoms.
- Start by exercising on your own. Begin walking or another form of activity that you can add to your daily routine.
- Invite others to join you. Exercising together is more fun and increases the chance you will continue. All you really need, though, is a good pair of shoes to get started walking. Select shoes and insoles for maximum shock absorption.
- Visit commit2fit.com for free exercise and nutrition programs in Flint & Genesee County.
- You may be eligible for a free wearable fitness tracker! Contact commit2fit@flint.org or (810) 232-2228.

AEROBIC EXERCISE PROGRAMS

American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) recommends at least 150 minutes per week of moderate intensity aerobic activity for adults. They also suggest muscle strengthening twice a week.

Follow the **FITT** Principle to design and implement a safe, effective exercise program!

Frequency – Be active on most days of the week but at least 3 to 4 days.

Intensity – Exercise at a moderate level. Use the “talk test” to help you monitor. For example, even though you may notice a slight rise in your heart rate and breathing, you should be able to carry on a conversation while walking at a moderate pace.

Time – Exercise at least 30 minutes per day. You can do it all at once or break it up into a few sessions of at least 10 minutes each. Multiple, shorter sessions may help reduce joint pain.

Type – Exercise in the water to reduce joint stress. It also improves cardiovascular fitness. Do activities you enjoy and will do regularly in your new, more active lifestyle. Add variety depending on the day or the season to keep your program more enjoyable.



RA SPECIFIC EXERCISE CAUTIONS

- Exercise is uncomfortable for about 85 percent of people with RA. This will affect how much exercise you can do.
- Schedule your exercise each day when your pain is lowest. Also, plan to exercise when your pain medication is most effective.
- During flare-ups, you may be unable to exercise or to exercise as much. Joint and muscle pain, joint stiffness, and muscular and psychological fatigue will make exercise more difficult.
- Avoid vigorous exercise during acute flare-ups or periods of inflammation. Instead, try gentle stretching exercises. These will help increase your range of motion.

AEROBIC EXERCISE CAUTIONS

- If you have been inactive for a long time, start with shorter sessions (10 to 15 minutes). Add 5 minutes to each session, increasing every 2 to 4 weeks. Over time, build up to being active at least 30 minutes a day on most days of the week.
- Expect some discomfort after your workouts. You should not be in pain, though. If pain is greater 2 hours after exercise than it was before, reduce the length and intensity of your next session.



- Total exercise time is more important than intensity. If you exercise at too high an intensity, you may not be able to exercise very long. This increases your risk of injury.
- Avoid vigorous, highly repetitive activities. This is especially true for people with unstable joints.
- Avoid overuse and repetitive stress injuries by alternating types of exercise over consecutive days.
- Drink plenty of fluids before, during, and after exercise.

RESISTANCE EXERCISE PROGRAMS

Evidence suggests that light to moderate intensity resistance training is a good addition to your program. Muscle atrophy often accompanies RA and OA. Resistance training helps reverse atrophy. It also strengthens the muscles surrounding the joint and this reduces the risk of injury and more joint damage. Resistance training helps in other ways, too. It increases or maintains the amount of muscle. It improves your ability to function and it also promotes overall good health.

Follow the **FITT** Principle When Creating a Resistance Exercise Program, Too!

Frequency – Do resistance training at least 2 to 3 days per week. Plan a day of rest between sessions.

Intensity – Light to moderate. Light intensity is weight you can lift 15 to 20 times. Moderate intensity is weight you can lift 10 to 15 times.

Time – This depends on the number of exercises you do. In general, do 1 to 3 sets of 10 to 15 repetitions.

Type – Exercise all major muscle groups but concentrate more on muscles surrounding the affected joints first. This will help strengthen and stabilize them. Exercise in the water with light resistance to reduce stress on the joints. Water exercise conditions muscles through a full, pain-free range of motion. Exercise with a machine or with free weights. There is little difference between them.

Don't belong to a gym or health club? No problem. You can do the same exercises at home using free weights or resistance bands. You also can use your body as the resistance with push-ups and sit-ups. Also, view free fitness classes in your community at commit2fit.com.



RESISTANCE EXERCISE CAUTIONS

- Avoid holding your breath when lifting. This can cause large changes in blood pressure. That change may increase the risk of passing out or developing abnormal heart rhythms. This is especially true if you also have high blood pressure.
- Start with 10 to 15 repetitions. Build up to 15 to 20 repetitions before you add another set.