

# *Personal Training by Robert J. Bovee*

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## **EXERCISE ARTHRITIS AWAY**

Arthritis is one of the most common health problems in the United States. The pain of arthritis extends far beyond the affected joints and tissues. Sufferers experience feelings of depression, anger, anxiety and loss of self esteem. Arthritis is associated with the joints, which are junctions between two or more bones. The joints are held in place by tough, fibrous ligaments and the joint capsule. Smooth cartilage covers the ends of the bone endings to allow easy articulation. A thin membrane called the synovium covers the inner lining of the joint capsule and secretes joint-lubricating fluid called synovial fluid.

Osteoarthritis, also called degenerative arthritis, is associated with age. By age **55**, about **80%** of us show X-ray evidence of osteoarthritis. This condition begins when the slippery cartilage covering the bone endings degenerates. The onset of osteoarthritis is also associated with body misalignment, hereditary, obesity, as well as trauma or joint injury. The incidence of rheumatoid arthritis, a newer form of arthritis, also increases with age and appears to be genetically based.

Obesity can increase the incidence of osteoarthritis, particularly in weight-bearing joints such as the hips and knees. By helping to control obesity, exercise prevents early onset of the disease. Stress also seems to play a role in rheumatoid arthritis. Because exercise is an effective stress reliever, it may help this form of arthritis. Since joint cartilage has a poor blood supply, it depends on the squeezing motion of exercise to circulate the synovial fluid that maintains it. Physicians believe that the right balance of rest and exercise can slow osteoarthritis, and may even reverse the disease. They suggest that exercise may repair arthritic damage by stimulating the development of new cartilage to replace worn-away cartilage.

Joints need movement for nourishment. Being immobile is comparable to "choking" a joint. Body systems, including the joints, work better when they are used than when they are not used. If an individual currently suffers from arthritis, this should not jeopardize their overall fitness. The idea is to be as active as possible. If activity stops because of limitations in one or a few joints, the whole body will rapidly deteriorate. Exercise programs that include range of motion, flexibility, strength and endurance exercises will result in: **(1)** less muscle shortening and joint contraction, **(2)** fewer muscle spasms, **(3)** improved circulation in affected joints, **(4)** increased mobility and range of motion, **(5)** decreased chance of disability and deformity, and **(6)** improved sense of well-being and self-esteem.

For more information, please contact Robert J. Bovee at **(585) 330-0614**.