



## PERSONAL MESSAGE

# ARTHRITIS: Can I Protect My Joints By Changing The Way I Do Things?

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Working with you, our programs can relieve pain and improve function.

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The answer is YES. Changing the way you do things can preserve the structures of the joint.

Arthritis affects more than 20 million Americans each year. The most common form of arthritis is osteoarthritis, followed by rheumatoid arthritis. Arthritis can affect people physically, financially, and emotionally. If you experience arthritis, you can decrease your pain, reduce destructive forces on the joint, and maintain range of motion by adhering to a few joint protection rules.

Listen to what your body is telling you. If you have pain in your joints while doing an activity or immediately afterwards, the activity may not be good for you. You may also experience pain when you are performing repetitive activities such as knitting or gardening. Knitting, for example, may cause your fingers to stiffen up or you may notice pain or stiffness while knitting or immediately after you stop knitting. In either case the pain or stiffness you feel is your body's way of telling you that knitting hurts your joints.

Joint protection can help you prevent tissue damage. There are several rules of joint protection. If each rule is followed, you can help minimize the effects of arthritis on your joints.

**1. Maintain fitness, strengthen muscles, and increase range of motion.** If you are in good physical shape, your muscles will be better able to support your joints. You will also be better able to maintain the full range of motion needed for all types of activities. Add cardiovascular activities like dancing, swimming, and bicycling to your exercise routine to help stay in good shape.

#### 2. Minimize destructive forces on your joints.

Try to avoid heavy lifting, gripping against resistance, and activities that cause pain. In other words, you should try not to lift heavy groceries or move heavy furniture. You should also avoid activities that require you to maintain a tight pinch or grip, such as furniture refinishing. If you cannot avoid these types of activities, be sure to take frequent breaks.

**3. Avoid static positions for long periods of time.** All types of arthritis can cause stiffness when joints are not in use. You should rotate between resting and activity—try changing your position every half-hour. Create a balance between rest to allow healing and exercise to maintain strength and range of motion. Motion is lotion to the joints.

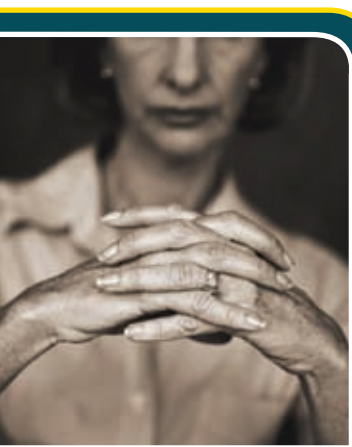
Your Physical Therapist will help you analyze the activities that you do regularly. He or she will help you learn how to modify these activities using the joint protection rules and adaptive equipment. Remember, reduced pain or pain-free participation in activities is the key to helping you maintain strength, range of motion and well-being. It's not always what you do but how you do it that is the key to staying active.



Sheila Yonemoto, PT—Owner, Yonemoto Physical Therapy

# ARTHRITIS:

## If You Have Questions, We Have Answers



“Healthy cartilage allows bones to slide effortlessly over one another. As a joint moves, the cartilage acts like a shock absorber and helps avoid excess stress on the joint...”

“You are sitting around the dinner table with your family, and the conversation turns to the weather. Didn’t everyone just eat and watch the football game? Who had time to turn to The Weather Channel? Ironically (or coincidentally), it was Grandma, Grandpa, Uncle Frank, and Aunt Emma who all seemed to know the weather for tomorrow. Clairvoyant? No. Arthritis? Probably.

With more than 20 million Americans affected by arthritis each year, chances are you or someone you know has the disease. But which of the hundred or so different forms of arthritis do your weather predicting relatives actually have? Most likely they have osteoarthritis (OA) or Rheumatoid arthritis (RA), if they have arthritis at all... keeping in mind that not all joint discomfort is caused by arthritis.

### What is Osteoarthritis?

So then, what exactly is OA and why do so many people seem to have it? To find both answers, think about an adult human skeleton. The human body consists of thousands of bones. At each location where two or more bones come together there is a joint. Joint cartilage is the lubricated, elastic tissue that covers the ends of the bones in a joint. Healthy cartilage allows bones to slide effortlessly over one another. As joints move, the cartilage acts as a shock absorber and helps avoid excess stress on the joint.

In osteoarthritis, the cartilage breaks down, becoming thinner and even wearing completely away. If it wears down too much, the bones will rub together. As you can imagine, there is no real way to replenish the lubrication in human joints and cartilage. With years of use, the lubrication may wear away and the cartilage may break down. This could cause pain, swelling, stiffness and possible loss of motion of the joint. The stiffness may be worse in the morning and after periods of not moving the joint. The joint may eventually lose its normal shape, becoming deformed or crooked.

### Rheumatoid Arthritis

Rheumatoid arthritis affects the joint surface but it can also affect the soft tissues surrounding the joint. Although rheumatoid arthritis can develop in childhood, it usually develops between ages 25 and 50. There may be a family connection however, rheumatoid arthritis is not inherited. Rheumatoid arthritis can cause joint damage over time or damage may be immediate.

Okay, so this brings Grandma to mind again, and, rightfully so. It is a fact that most people develop at least some degree of arthritis by the time they are 65. However, arthritis can develop at any age, especially in people who have had previous injuries such as a fracture to the joint.

### Where Can Arthritis Affect You?

So, where does arthritis affect you? Osteoarthritis can actually affect any joint of the body, however, it most often occurs in the hands, knees, hips and lower back.

#### In the hand:

OA most often develops in areas that are used the most: at the base of the thumb where the thumb and wrist come together, at the middle joint of the finger, and/or at the fingertip.

When OA occurs in the hand, it is often very visible. OA in the fingertip joint or the middle joint of the finger sometimes causes the growth of bony knobs called nodes. These nodes tend to be hereditary and affect more women than men. During the onset of the disease, the joint may feel painful, stiff or numb. The pain may eventually subside or go away, but the bony nodes remain, affecting the mobility of the joints. Often when OA develops in the fingertips and also in the middle of the finger, it tends to affect both hands. Individual fingers are often affected in markedly different ways.



## Wrist

While less frequent, osteoarthritis may also occur in the wrist and cause pain and loss of range of motion. The pain in the wrist worsens with activity. There is generally not much swelling in the wrist.

## Other Joints in Upper Extremities/Arm

Osteoarthritis can also occur in other joints in the upper extremities / arm.

Elbow OA is uncommon but can come from repetitive use. Pain may be present and there may be an inability to straighten the elbow.

OA of the shoulder occurs most frequently in the elderly female population. It usually begins with pain during activity followed by pain when sleeping on the shoulder. A loss of movement of the shoulder may also occur.

## Spine

OA can affect any part of the spine from the neck (cervical); to the middle back (thoracic); and most frequently down into the lower back (lumbar and sacral region).

This often leads to significant loss of motion, with pain that can radiate into the arms and upper back (from the neck), or down into the buttocks and legs (from the lumbar and sacral region). This can cause interference with daily activities, work, and the ability to enjoy leisure activities.



Many people think of arthritis as a normal part of aging. They may falsely think that nothing can be done to help them.

However, your Physical Therapist can help you or someone you know to actively manage OA. Your PT will educate you about the disease and joint protection to improve the ability to use the affected body part.

## Hips and Knees

When the hips and knees are affected, the person often experiences a significant reduction in mobility and the ability to perform daily activities, work, and leisure activities. One of the most common surgeries performed is replacement of these arthritic joints. The success of this type of intervention is highly dependent on the appropriate post-surgery care and rehabilitation.

## Feet

OA of the feet results in significant deformity and loss of mobility.

The foot is the first link between the body and the ground. Reduction or failure of function of the foot produces negative effects up and down the whole chain (spine – hips – knees – ankles).

## Your Physical Therapist Can Help

Many people think of arthritis as a normal part of aging. They may even think that nothing can be done to help them. However, a Physical Therapist (PT) can help you actively manage OA. Your PT will educate you about the disease and joint protection to improve your ability to use your affected body part. They will also offer advice on how to live with the disease without aggravating or accelerating the damage caused by OA.

Using specialized skills in assessment of pain, swelling, loss of motion and strength, your PT can determine the appropriate course of treatment. They can also recommend specialized tools (adaptive devices) for your daily activities. Whether at home, leisure or work, these tools can help make it easier to do the task.

In most cases, the sooner therapy begins, the better the outcome. Proper treatment earlier on can help limit pain and improve function. Early treatment can mean less joint damage and less pain. Don't ignore what your body is telling you. Find out why you are having pain by seeing your doctor and a Physical Therapist as soon as possible.



# FAQ

## Is all joint pain arthritis?

Joint pain can be caused by conditions other than arthritis. A doctor can perform certain simple tests to determine if your pain is caused by arthritis.

## Why do my joints hurt if I have osteoarthritis?

The cartilage that protects the joints can become worn after many years of use. Pain is caused by one bone rubbing against an adjoining bone.

## Can exercising worsen my osteoarthritis and cause me to hurt even more?

The proper exercise, without causing pain, is actually one of the best things you can do to treat OA. Motion is lotion to the joints. You need to be careful not to overdo it when exercising. A Physical Therapist can teach you how to properly exercise to avoid further complications.

## Can osteoarthritis be cured?

Osteoarthritis is not "curable" but treatment can help decrease pain and inflammation as well as improve function. By doing exercises to strengthen the joint and modalities such as ultrasound to decrease inflammation, the pain in your joint will decrease and your function will be improved.

## Do only the elderly get arthritis?

It is true that a higher percent of elderly people do have osteoarthritis. However, osteoarthritis has no age barriers. While not as common, it can occur in children, teenagers and younger adults.

## If I regularly participate in sports activities, am I bound to get osteoarthritis when I am older?

Participating in sports activities increases your risk of joint injury. Joint injury increases your chances of osteoarthritis in that joint. However, unless you injure a joint while playing a sport, you do not increase your risk of OA.

## My thumbs hurt during activities. Is there anything I can do to help stop the pain?

Exercise and wearing a custom splint fabricated by a Physical Therapist can be very helpful in decreasing pain or eliminating pain. These splints can even be fashionable, looking like silver or gold jewelry!

## What is joint protection?

Joint protection is a set of rules concerning how to use your body to avoid destructive forces and minimize the wear and tear on joints.

## Take this simple test...

## Call your Physical Therapist if you:

YES	NO	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Have stiffness in your hand, elbow, shoulder, back or knee when you are in cold places such as the frozen food aisle at the supermarket.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Have pain when holding a book.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Have had a severe injury or surgery to a hand, elbow, shoulder, back or knee.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Must take medication for pain in your hand, elbow, shoulder, back or knee more than once a week.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Stopped doing hobbies and sports because you have trouble moving your hand, elbow, shoulder, back or knee.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Have cramps or pain in your hands while writing.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Have had pain, stiffness or swelling in or around a joint during the past 12 months, especially in the morning.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Have difficulty performing everyday tasks such as tying your shoes, buttoning a button, lifting full pots off a stove, or chopping food.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Have crooked fingers and/or funny bumps by your knuckles.

**Simply place a check mark in the appropriate box. Once you are done, calculate the number of checks in the YES column and look at the results.**



## Results:

### Less than 1 Yes

You're doing fine. Exercising may help keep your joints in check.

### Between 2 and 6 Yes

Physical Therapy could definitely be an option for you.

### More than 6 Yes

We would advise you to see a doctor to get a better diagnosis, but Physical Therapy is definitely an option.

# Featured Physical Therapist



## Belen Gulick, MA, P.T.

Belen grew up in West Los Angeles and later graduated from UCLA with a degree in Kinesiology. She earned her Master of Arts degree in Physical Therapy from Stanford University. After her graduate studies, she worked at a variety of settings, including Orthopaedic Hospital and a private practice specializing in the treatment of TMJ disorders. Belen became a physical therapist because she finds helping people return to their daily activities very rewarding.

She is married and has two daughters. In addition to being very busy raising a family and a new puppy, she enjoys cooking and reading.

Belen has been a Yonemoto team member for 21 years.

## SUCCESSSES

## What patients are saying...

*"My recovery from both knee replacement procedures was rapid, and relatively painless thanks to you all. I can walk without pain, and look forward to future hikes!"*

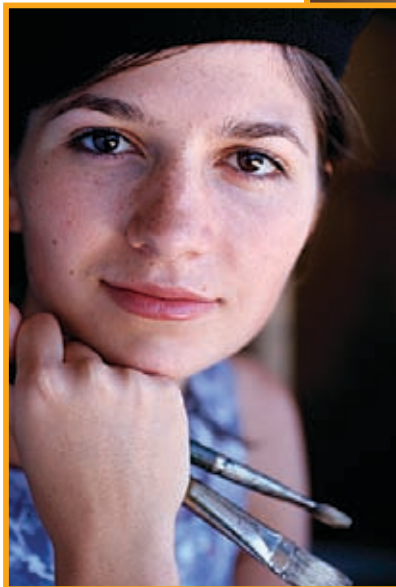
*- Mary L.*

*"This summer 2010 I had a strong adverse reaction to Pravachol, a cholesterol medication. My joints and limbs were in almost crippling pain. Stopping the medication had an immediate effect and therapy helped restore my mobility."*

*- Peggy S.*

*They are all exceptional caring people and I would highly recommend anyone that needs physical therapy to Yonemoto's place of business."*

*- Pat M.*



*"I came to Yonemoto after prostate cancer surgery. Sheila was caring and positive. Her exercises helped tremendously and my incontinence after surgery is well on the road to recovery."*

*- B.G.*

*"We have to thank Belen Gulick and the Yonemoto clinic again. Your sound medical treatments and personal care really came through for us again."*

*- Frank V.*

*"Therapy at Yonemoto has helped me to improve my mobility since my stroke."*

*Everyday is challenging but I keep in mind the positive attitude and effort shown by my therapist, Mary Tan."*

*- Paul S.*

*"Doug's knowledge in therapy entwined with the personal interest he took in my day-to-day progress was most impressive. I would highly recommend him and Yonemoto PT to anyone seeking physical therapy."*

*- John A.*



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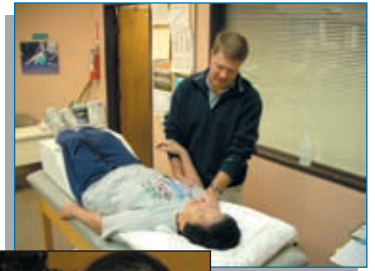
**Go to:  
[www.yonemoto.com](http://www.yonemoto.com)**



Yonemoto Physical Therapy has successfully treated patients since 1982. We provide several therapy programs ranging from Integrative Manual Therapy, wellness programs, Worksteps which provides services for employers, chi-gong, as well as therapy for common orthopedic problems such as backaches, knee injuries and twisted ankles and pool therapy programs.

Other specialties include orthopedics and sports medicine, TMJ, chronic headaches, Bell's Palsy, urinary incontinence, and low back pain from pregnancy.

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**ARTHRITIS**  
**Can You Protect Your Joints?**

If you have questions, we have answers!

**What is Osteoarthritis?**

Arthritis: Can changing the way you do things protect your joints?

**In This Issue:**

**Superior Treatment  
from Yonemoto Physical Therapy**

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