

# When arthritis strikes, keep moving, says expert

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Your achy joints may suggest that you take it easy. Don't listen to them,

experts say.

If it hurts when you get up from a chair or climb stairs, you might have osteoarthritis. If so, it's best to keep moving.

"While the pain from osteoarthritis worsens with activity and improves with rest, [exercise](#) is still the most cost-effective treatment for it," said Dr. Kathryn Dao, an associate professor of internal medicine at UT Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas.

"Studies have shown exercise can build cartilage, strengthen muscles, and improve joint function and bone mass. Patients who exercise also have [better balance](#) and a lower risk of falling," Dao, a rheumatology specialist, said in a medical center news release.

This type of arthritis is caused by degenerative changes in the cartilage that connects joints and cushions the ends of bones. Symptoms can include pain, stiffness and limited mobility. You may have tenderness at the joint, along with swelling or popping sounds.

The condition affects about 1 in 7 American adults, most commonly affecting hands, knees, hips and spine.

Arthritis is common with age, but can also develop because of past injuries or surgeries, Dao said.

It's more likely to occur when a joint has endured repetitive stress, such as with a particular sport or job. Obesity is another risk factor.

People with [inflammatory arthritis](#), such as gout, [rheumatoid arthritis](#) or [psoriatic arthritis](#), are also more prone to getting osteoarthritis, Dao said.

UT Southwestern and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention recommend exercising regularly and maintaining a healthy weight to prevent or control arthritis symptoms.

A good goal is to get 150 minutes of moderate-intensity [aerobic exercise](#) each week. Start with less intensity and less time and work your way up, Dao suggested.

You could also break down your 30 daily minutes into two 15-minute sessions a day.

High-impact activities such as jumping, [long-distance](#) running, stair climbing or lifting heavy weights may cause more pain.

"Low-impact exercises such as swimming, bicycling, Pilates, yoga, and walking on level ground are better tolerated and effective in patients with moderate to severe osteoarthritis," Dao said. "Stretching before and after a workout also helps to loosen the muscles and lubricates the joints to prevent injury."

If you're experiencing significant pain or weakness, Dao recommends seeing a doctor for possible referral to a physical therapist or a trainer to help you create an exercise program.

**More information:** The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on [physical activity for adults](#).

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