
JOINT HEALTH 101

CHECKLIST



The **Right Way** To Keep Your Joints Healthy

Joint Health 101 Checklist

While you can't really fight the process of aging, you can surely slow down the rate of damage inflicted on joints due to wear and tear. Learning how to nourish and take care of your joints will let you stay flexible for longer and yield relief for painful joints. This checklist will run you through the simple tips and techniques to keep your joints healthy.

Chapter 1: The Importance of Joint Health

Every time you sprint to catch the bus, score a point against your opposing team, or shoot pool with friends, you're using your extremely functional musculoskeletal system. This means a combination of bones, joints and muscles get you going where you want to go.

Given the important functions of mobility and movement, it becomes crucial that you take good care of your joints. After all, you put them through so much wear and tear throughout your life.

Joints that aren't well taken care of become susceptible to injury, inflammation and general dislocation. As age catches up with you, you can feel the effects of overuse weathering away your joints. So keep your joints healthy at every stage of your life so they can keep you moving even in old age.

What Are Joints?

Joints are also known as articulations forming strong connections that join bones, teeth, and cartilage to one another. Now you have the freedom of movement in different ways and directions.

Some joints open and close like a hinge such as your knees and elbows, allowing you to straighten or bend your legs and arms. You sit down, stand up, pick up, and put down stuff using these joints without giving it a second thought.

Others joints are meant for more complicated movements such as your shoulder or hip joint. These allow for forward, backward, sideways, and rotating movements. Just think of everything you can do with these joints and you'll get an idea of how limited your movement can become if any of these joints suffer damage.

Types of Joints And Their Functions

Each joint is specialized in its shape and structure to control the range of motion between the parts it connects. For easier understanding, you may classify joints based on the function they perform or how much movement they allow. Both categories will let you divide joints into three broad classes:

- Immovable or fixed joints.
- Slightly movable or cartilaginous joints.
- Freely movable or synovial joints.

Synovial joints can further be divided into 6 types including the following:

- **Hinge** joints such as the fingers and toes
- **Ball and socket** joints such as the shoulders and hips

- **Pivot** joints such as the neck
- **Gliding** joints such as the wrist
- **Saddle** joints such as the thumb
- **Planar** joints such as the ankle

Chapter 2: A Look at Common Joint Problems

A common source of joint discomfort is inflammation. In fact, many of the problems associated with joint pain stem from inflammation. This can cause joints to become inflamed, swollen, stiff and even rickety when cushioning in the area gets affected.

Here's a look at some of the most common issues causing joints to become inflamed and painful.

- Arthritis
- Gout
- Bursitis
- Repetitive Movement Injuries

Chapter 3: Exercise Your Joints

To prevent joint damage and increase joint strength, exercise is very important. To preserve your joint health, you need to work on certain aspects of exercise that will keep your joints mobile, and minimize damage brought on by age or other factors. Here's what you need to keep in mind when doing so.

- Work for Flexibility and Range of Motion
- Strengthen Your Core
- Variety is Key
- Joint Specific Exercises

Chapter 4: Balance Your Diet

If you don't lead a healthy life with a balanced diet, health issues will catch up with you sooner than you'd like. There's always room for improvement and you can start making changes in your diet at any point in life. A joint-healthy diet helps keep away pain, stiffness and reduced mobility.

Nutrients that Nourish Your Joints

The food you eat contains different nutrients such as fats, proteins, fiber, vitamins and carbohydrates. The two most important nutrients for joint health are minerals and vitamins.

Best Foods for Joint Health

Naturally, the best foods for joint health will include these aforementioned nutrients along with others. If you already suffer

from joint-related conditions, then altering your diet may actually help reduce your painful or discomforting issues.

For instance, there are some foods that can actually help reduce the effects of arthritis and also relieve pain. Many patients suffering from arthritis admit that changes in their diet plan have helped reduce the severity of their symptoms

One of the best foods to eat if you have painful or inflamed joints is fatty fish. Salmon and sardines are rich in omega 3 fatty acids.

Garlic is also very important for people suffering from painful joints. Its immune strengthening properties make cells stronger and can target inflammation as well.

Broccoli is not only effective for keeping your weight in check but also great for joint health. It's involved in blocking a certain type of cell that accelerates the progression of rheumatoid arthritis. Walnuts are also anti-inflammatory in their effect and they may even reduce the need for painkillers.

If you love berries, then you are in luck because berries also reduce inflammatory markers associated with arthritis. Whether it's black berries or strawberries, all kinds are great for joint health. Spinach is another green that helps promote joint health.

Spinach is a powerful green vegetable that helps prevent the progression of osteoarthritis. At the same time, it also improves cartilage health and reduces inflammatory agents that cause rheumatoid arthritis.

Another fruit for fighting joint pain is Grapes. The outer covering of grapes contains resveratrol, which has antioxidant properties. Grapes also slow down the thickening of joints and block the production of cells causing rheumatoid arthritis.

Foods to Avoid

There are some foods that you need to avoid in order to prevent progression or worsening of joint pains. Firstly, fried foods and processed edibles are a huge No for anyone with painful joints. These foods can significantly decrease the body's immunity and cause inflammation.

AGE or Advanced Glycation End Product, as they increase in the body, can cause inflammation.

You might love nibbling on cheese slices but this isn't healthy for your joints. Dairy products contribute to joint deterioration due to their protein content.

Corn oil is present in many snacks and some baked goods too. It gives a pleasant taste to food but can trigger inflammatory markers to go in action and increases the risk of joint pain. This is because corn oil is rich in Omega 6 fatty acids. Instead of eating omega 6s, you can try using oils rich in Omega 3s, such as olive oil and flaxseed oil.

Some cuts of red meat can also exacerbate inflammation as they are rich in saturated fats.

Chapter 5: Watch Your Weight

So now that you know that one of the factors affecting joint health is lack of physical activity, what do you do about it? Well, you naturally start off with some form of exercise to improve joint flexibility and range of motion. But at the same time, you also have to watch your weight.

When your body becomes too heavy to be supported by your joints and bones, problems start to arise. As such, you need to exercise and eat right to keep your body at an optimal weight.

How Weight Affects Joints

When you're overweight, there's extra stress on the joints that bears your weight. The most common of these joints is the knee joint and it's the first one to get affected by excess weight. The second reason why weight is detrimental for joints is that as your weight increases, the inflammatory markers in the body also increase. This further causes joint deterioration in other places such as your hands and neck.

Reduce Stress on Joints

Weight loss is a great way to reduce stress on your joints. On average, the amount of pressure or stress on your knees is 1 1/2 times that of your body weight. So, if you weigh 300 pounds, you are putting 450 pounds of stress on your knees. This is when you are in standing position. As the incline increases, the stress increases too.

Every pound you lose represents about 3500 calories. So, if you're hoping to lose one pound in a week, you need to burn about 500 calories in a day. The exercise plan you follow must at least help you lose 500 calories in a day.

Along with exercise, you also need to focus on your diet. Even if you're young and not arthritic, it's essential that you watch your weight to dodge this disease in a few years' time.

Pay Attention to Your Posture

It's a basic rule of thumb that good posture can save you from a lot of pain. Improper posture often becomes the cause of back pain and knee pain. Standing up straight is a good way to keep your knees, legs and back safe from stress.

Chapter 6: Home Remedies for Easing Joint Pain

Oftentimes, doctors prescribe painkillers and anti-inflammatory drugs for joint pain. But if you're someone concerned about the side effects of medication, you may just wish to use some tried-and-true home remedies instead. Where the pain isn't too bad or too frequent, you may be able to get relief from these simple home remedies. These remedies are effective for treating joint pain in knees, neck, hips, ankles and lower back.

- Epsom Salts
- Essential Oils
- Soaking the Sun
- Hot and Cold Packs
- Chamomile Tea Poultice
- Swimming
- Soothing Music
- Acupuncture
- Walking

Chapter 7: Best Supplements for Joint Health

As you've seen previously, increased friction between joints leads to the sensation of pain and discomfort. While many resort to medication, (coming up in the next chapter) as the primary solution to the problem, supplements are also a popular alternative. And while there is a plethora of supplements available, here we'll only look at some of the best in this category.

- Glucosamine
- Chondroitin
- SAM-E
- Capsaicin
- Curcumin
- Omega 3s
- Hyaluronic Acid

Chapter 8: Other Options to Treat Joint Pain

When your joint pain becomes bothersome to a greater extent, you can get help from some other options including the following:

- Medications
- Topical Agents
- Injections
- Physical Therapy