

Strength Training Eases Arthritis Pain

Osteoarthritis is the most common type of arthritis experienced by athletes. It is a degenerative disease where cartilage in the joint gradually wears away. Stress on the knee joint, overuse, structural abnormalities, or excess body weight can cause osteoarthritis. Typical signs and symptoms of osteoarthritis include knee pain, swelling, and a decrease in the range of motion of the knee. Morning stiffness is common. The condition often limits activity levels in sufferers and even the desire to exercise. But studies suggest that basic strength training exercise can dramatically reduce the symptoms of arthritis and allow individuals to increase their activity levels.

One study, published in the [Journal of Rheumatology](#), followed two groups of individuals with a diagnosis of osteoarthritis over four months.

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One group followed their regular routine. The other group performed simple home-based weight bearing exercise, including such things as squats and leg extensions. Those who performed simple weight training exercises reported a 43 percent reduction in pain and a 44 percent improvement in physical functioning (walking, stair climbing, sitting, and standing) than compared to the non-exercising group.

The researchers conclude that high intensity, home based strength training can produce substantial improvements in strength, pain, physical function and quality of life in patients with knee osteoarthritis. They reason that weight training exercise can reduce the symptoms of arthritis because strong muscles act as shock absorbers for the joints. If muscles are able to take pressure off of the joints during activities such as walking, there is less joint-related pressure and pain.

Anti-inflammatory medication also helps treat the pain of those with osteoarthritis and still is recommended for some people. But while anti-inflammatories help reduce the pain and stiffness, pills don't rebuild muscles or protect the joints, like strength training exercise.