

CONTACT:
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Physical Activity Relieves Arthritis Symptoms

BALTIMORE, MD (April 15, 2004) – Relief from arthritis pain does not necessarily mean a trip to the doctor’s office or a pharmacist -- for the nearly one-third of Maryland adults with the disease, it could be as simple as getting 30 minutes of moderate physical activity three or more days per week.

In fact, a current focus of the Maryland Arthritis Project is a campaign to increase public awareness of the benefits of physical activity for those who have arthritis. This program, a collaborative effort between the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and the Maryland State Advisory Council on Arthritis and Related Diseases, is designed to educate the public and health care providers about arthritis and steps that can be taken to ease its discomfort.

“Studies show that as part of a total treatment plan, moderate physical activity can relieve pain and stiffness and help arthritis sufferers move around more easily,” said _____ Health Officer for _____ County. “The physical activity doesn’t have to be strenuous -- walking, swimming, and even gardening are all good examples of appropriate activities.”

For arthritis sufferers who avoid physical activity because of painful joints, an adjustment period is likely.

“There may be some discomfort in the first few days, as the body gets used to increased movement,” said _____ (Health Officer). “This is especially true for people who are used to a sedentary lifestyle.”

If a 30-minute session proves to be too much, 10 or 15 minutes of activity a couple times a day works just as well. For example, a 15-minute walk after breakfast and another 15 minute walk after dinner is sufficient.

“The important thing is to start slowly, and keep moving,” said _____ (Health Officer). “And to help maintain your motivation, remember that for many people, physical activity is more fun when a friend or family member joins in.”

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Some people with arthritis often don't seek treatment because they fall victim to popular myths such as arthritis is just a normal part of aging, or that nothing can be done to relieve its symptoms.

"This simply isn't the case," said _____ (Health Officer). "In addition to physical activity, there are many other things people can do to reduce arthritis symptoms."

For instance, maintaining a healthy body weight is important, since arthritis is more common in overweight individuals. Also, knowing when to slow down and rest is essential to avoiding pain caused by overexertion."

And don't forget, self-help programs are available to show people how they can better manage their symptoms. Courses are offered locally through (name of organizations offering arthritis courses.)

If you are not sure whether your aches and pains are really arthritis, the Arthritis Foundation recommends you see your health care provider if you have one or more of the following symptoms:

- Swelling in one or more joints;
- Early morning stiffness;
- Recurring pain or tenderness in any joint;
- Inability to move a joint normally;
- Obvious redness and warmth in a joint;
- Unexplained weight loss, combined with joint pain, fever or weakness; or
- Symptoms persisting for more than two weeks

For more information about the Maryland Arthritis Project, contact _____(Local Health Department) at (insert phone number.)

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