



**HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL**  
*Trusted advice for a healthier life*

## 5 ways to keep arthritis from slowing you down

Arthritis is a painful problem that can interfere with your ability to do the things you enjoy. But you can take steps to protect your joints, reduce discomfort, and improve mobility.



Physical or occupational therapists can be very helpful in teaching you how to modify activities and accomplish daily tasks more easily. But there are simple things you can do for yourself, starting today. Here are five of them:

1. **Keep moving.** Avoid holding one position for too long. When working at a desk, for example, get up and stretch every 15 minutes. Do the same while sitting at home reading or watching television.
2. **Discover your strength.** Put your strongest joints and muscles to work. To protect finger and wrist joints, push open heavy doors with the side of your arm or shoulder. To reduce hip or knee stress on stairs, let the strong leg lead going up and the weaker leg lead going down.
3. **Plan ahead.** Simplify and organize your routines so you minimize movements that are difficult or painful. Keep items you need for cooking, cleaning, or hobbies near where they are needed (even if that means multiple sets of cleaning supplies, one for your kitchen and each bathroom, for example).
4. **Take advantage of labor-saving devices and adaptive aids.** Simple gadgets and devices can make it easier to perform daily activities such as cooking, gardening, or even getting dressed. Long-handled grippers, for example, are designed to grasp and retrieve out-of-reach objects. Rubber grips can help you get a better handle on faucets, pens, toothbrushes, and silverware. Pharmacies, medical supply stores, and online vendors stock a variety of aids for people with arthritis.
5. **Ask for help.** People with arthritis often worry about the possibility of growing dependent on others. But only a very small percentage of people with arthritis become severely disabled. Still, the emotional burdens of arthritis can be considerable. Educate family members and friends about how arthritis affects you, and don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it.