

## Bodywork for Arthritis

We all know that how we treat our bodies will ultimately affect our overall health. But, is it also possible to alter the condition of our bodies, simply in the way we move? Researchers believe that it is, and some health professionals are suggesting that patients use 'bodywork' as a treatment for arthritis.

When you think of arthritis, you will likely picture someone plagued by stiff joints and swollen muscles. You may think of an elderly person with pained wrists or knees, who must use an assistive device just to be able to move throughout the house. But, arthritis doesn't need to be so debilitating.

If you've been diagnosed with arthritis, don't assume that you're doomed to a life without flexibility and body movement. It's not necessary to give up the freedom of mobility that you've enjoyed your entire life. On the contrary, arthritic patients should use mobility as their primary tool in overcoming the disease. Movement is important to retaining flexibility, improving posture and building strength.

Use these bodywork techniques in your wellness regime to help treat arthritis:

### Chiropractic Care

People visit chiropractors for all sorts of health and fitness benefits, and chiropractic care is a proven source of bodywork for arthritis. This form of treatment is particularly beneficial to those who suffer with arthritis in the spine or back muscles. Many arthritis sufferers who receive spinal adjustments claim to feel relief in the back and neck, and report a decrease in overall muscle pain and pressure.

It's important to note that not everyone is a good candidate for chiropractic therapy, because his or her joints may be too fragile. Speak to your doctor before you visit a chiropractor and, if he or she agrees that you can benefit from the therapy, ask for a recommendation. Try to find a chiropractor that has experience working with arthritic patients, and is gentle enough that you can visit them on a regular basis.

### Feldenkrais

This bodywork technique is a combination of massage and education that allows people with arthritis to loosen and exercise their joints and muscles. A Feldenkrais therapist will gently massage your body, while guiding your body toward small, simple movements aimed at increasing overall flexibility. Feldenkrais therapy is able to coax your body into "remembering" old movements that your body is no longer able to perform, or may have been doing incorrectly over the years. The movement is gentle and unforced, and will leave you feeling looser, more flexible, and less stressed. During your Feldenkrais massage session, your therapist can also show you exercises that can be practiced at home, so that you can bring about relief whenever you're feeling stiff and in pain.

### Massage

While not "technically" considered a true bodywork exercise, massage has been proven to be the saving grace for many people with arthritis. Just one professional massage session can go a long way toward relieving your tight, contracted muscles. Many arthritis patients experience substantial relief as the massage therapist gently massages and loosens your tired and stiff joints. If you've never been to a professional massage therapist, ask your friends or family members for recommendations. Speak to your doctor or visit your local YMCA center if you don't know anyone who can provide a good personal recommendation.

### Yoga

This literal translation of "yoga" is "union", and this ancient Indian art is practiced to attain the goal of bringing together body and spirit. It's believed that this is key to good health and overall well being. Yoga is an effective yet gentle bodywork exercise that can keep your body flexible, without overexerting your joints and muscles. Aside from the many physical benefits of yoga, this bodywork practice can also provide relaxation and anxiety-reducing effects that linger long after a session on the mat. Yoga is a wonderful activity to practice anytime you're feeling tired, stiff or just stressed.

When medicines and other traditional treatments don't bring the relief you need, try bodywork for arthritis. Get moving and see how a little effort can go a long way to helping you live a more flexible, pain-free life.