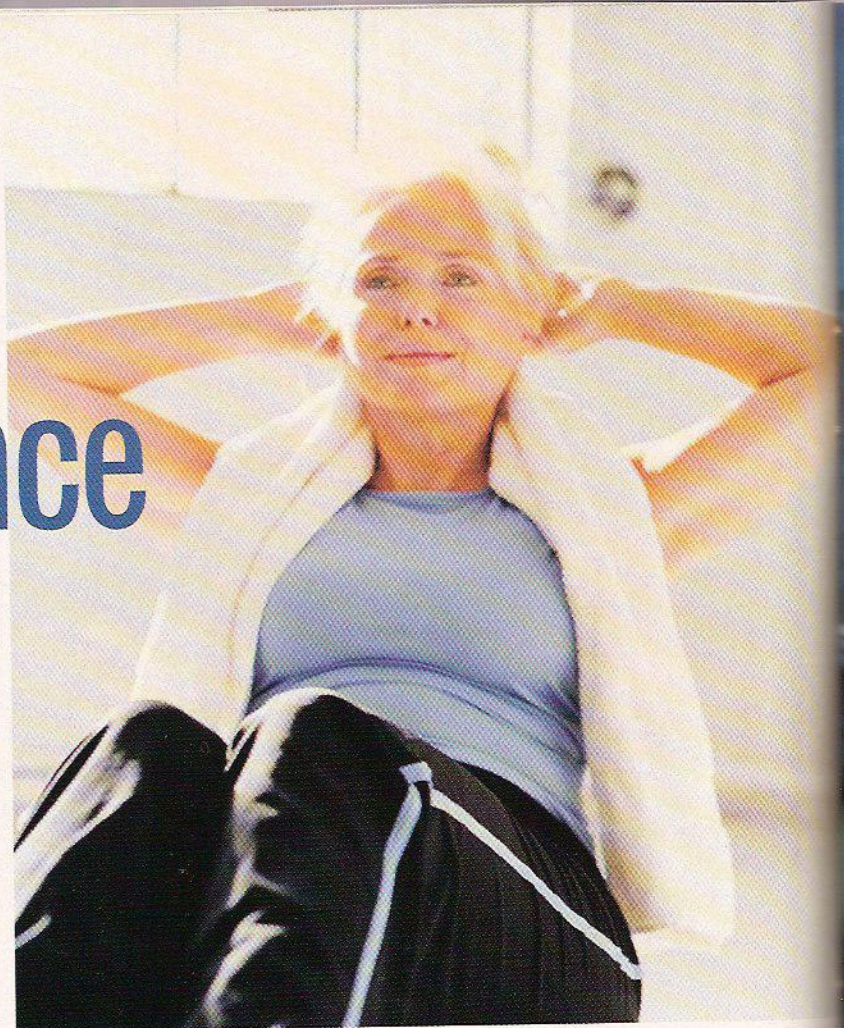


Proper Performance

Follow the experts' top 10 fitness 'do's'



YOU'VE FINALLY MADE THE COMMITMENT TO EXERCISE, but if you aren't exercising correctly, you could be doing your body more harm than good. According to the American Council on Exercise (ACE), there are 10 mistakes people – regardless of age or physical level – make repeatedly. Each one can cause stress and injury to the body, and that's not what your joints need. To get the most from your workout, be sure to follow this list of "do's."

1 WARM UP. It's important for raising body temperature and increasing blood flow to loosen the muscles, and when you skip a warm-up, you risk injury and stiffer joints the next day, says Jessie Jones, PhD, professor of kinesiology and health promotion, California State University-Fullerton. A simple warm-up: march in place for five minutes.

2 STRETCH. Stretching gives muscles a full range of motion. "Flexibility is key in preparing for aerobic activity, particularly when dealing with joint stiffness," says Cedric Bryant, chief exercise physiologist and vice president of education services for ACE. The best stretch? Hamstring stretches, says Bryant. "When a hamstring is tight, it can cause misalignment in the pelvis and knees."

3 COOL DOWN. A proper cool-down, which includes deep breathing and long stretches, will get your heart rate, breathing and blood pressure safely back to normal while improving flexibility.

4 LIFT WITHIN YOUR RANGE. Weight training increases energy and stamina, but be careful not to overdo it. "Lifting too much too soon is just going to damage the tissue," says Jones. When weight training, you should feel fatigue by the 12th or 15th repetition, be it a 1-pound or 100-pound weight. Once that becomes easy, add more weight.

5 GO EASY. A workout that's too intense can put you in an anaerobic state, which means you are not getting enough oxygen into your system. That causes joint and tissue pain, says Jones. How do you know if you're getting the right combination of aerobic activity and oxygen? Find your target heart rate (subtract your age from 220), then shoot for 40 to 70 percent of that rate. "Research has shown that you can improve pain levels and weight loss in an aerobic capacity anywhere after 40 percent," adds Jones.

6 BUT NOT TOO EASY. In order to lose weight, build muscle and maintain energy levels, a good workout means breaking a small sweat and working out at 40 to 70 percent of your target heart rate. However, there is a fine line for people with arthritis. "You have to work out within your pain level. If you're

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More Fitness 'Do's' To learn proper performance, try an Arthritis Foundation People With Arthritis Can Exercise (PACE) class, designed specifically for people with arthritis. The trained instructors guide you through exercises to increase flexibility, overall stamina and muscle strength. For a PACE class near you, contact your local Arthritis Foundation chapter or visit www.arthritis.org.

[FITNESS edited by LISSA POIROT]

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hurting a lot over the next couple of days after a workout, you need to change the intensity,” says Jones.

7 DRINK WATER. Working out means your body needs extra water to cool off and keep blood circulating. If you’re dehydrated, you aren’t doing either. Drink plenty of water prior to exercise, get another 6 to 8 ounces for every 15 minutes of exercise and then follow the workout with more water to replenish what was lost.

8 SKIP THE MEAL. Unless you are training for a marathon, you do not need extra calories before exercise. Eating less than two hours before a workout means blood flow is concentrating on digestion instead of on keeping muscles warm and delivering oxygen throughout your body. And it could leave you with cramps and nausea.

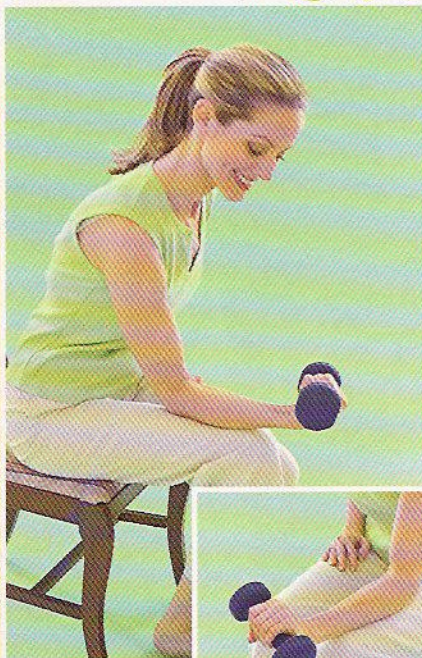
9 STAND UP STRAIGHT. It’s easy to lean on the armrests when using stationary equipment, such as a stair climber, but although leaning may feel easier, “You’re not using good posture, and that will only exacerbate joint pain,” says Jones.

10 DO IT RIGHT. Make sure you’re using the proper form when doing a move. “Because exercise can be bone on bone for a person with rheumatoid arthritis (RA) or osteoarthritis (OA), there is a greater chance of injury,” says Jones. “A lot of people use the wrong posture and hyperextend their joints.”

BONUS! 11 DON'T EXERCISE WHILE IN JOINT PAIN. “Pushing through pain is not the thing to do. If your joints are hot or swollen, exercise can increase the damage,” Jones says. But remember, arthritis pain and muscle pain from a strenuous workout are not the same. A little soreness a day or two after a workout is OK, more than that is not.

—LISSA POIROT

Get a Good Grip



Holding a hairbrush and lifting a plate from the table may sound like the easiest of tasks, but sometimes such simple chores become daily challenges. That’s when it’s time for a little wrist and forearm training. These exercises, performed two to three times a week, can help.

◀ WRIST CURL

From a seated position, rest your forearms on your thighs, extending your wrists just beyond the knee with palms up. Curl up a light weight (5 pounds or less) using only the wrist. Hold for two seconds, then slowly lower the weight. Perform two sets of 10 repetitions. If using a weight causes stress, try doing it without a weight. Your own resistance will strengthen the forearm muscles.

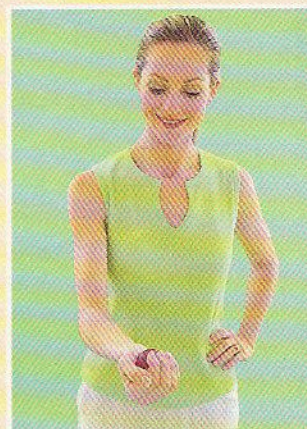
REVERSE WRIST CURL ▲

This exercise targets the extensor muscles of the forearm. With the palms facing down to the ground, hold the weight and curl your wrists back as high as you comfortably can, hold, lower and repeat. Perform two sets of 10 reps.

BALL SQUEEZE >

Squeeze a tennis ball, racquetball or squeeze toy tightly, hold for a count of two, release and allow your hand to fully open to stretch your fingers, then repeat. Because the resistance on this move is low, aim for more repetitions – try 15 to 20 squeezes, followed by 30 seconds of rest, then repeat. With practice, you can increase resistance.

—SEAN M. KENNY



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the genius of elliptical machines

You’re probably familiar with treadmills, but have you met their sophisticated cousins, elliptical machines? These machines offer the cardiovascular benefits of treadmills, with almost no impact to the joints – good news for knees and hips!

Your Choices. Ellipticals fall into two categories: independent or dependent. Independent machines make each leg work on its own, forcing you to work harder and providing an equal workout for each leg. On dependent machines, the force of one leg drives the other. Other features: moveable handles for upper body work, variable resistance and incline and the ability to go backwards.

It’s Like Riding a Bike. Unlike treadmills, which move immediately, ellipticals are set in motion by pushing your feet forward. Simply slow down when you want to stop. To intensify your cardio workout, increase the resistance instead of speeding up: it’s easier on the knees.

—JOANN MILIVOJEVIC

