

## How can physical therapy help people diagnosed with arthritis?

Last month we defined what osteoarthritis is. Following is a description of what to expect during the physical therapy treatment.

The goals for patients diagnosed with osteoarthritis are:

1. Reduce pain
2. Restore mobility, function, strength, and flexibility
3. Prevent unnecessary disability
4. Teach self-management skills (how to cope with arthritis in your day-to-day life)

Once the doctor gives the patient a prescription for physical therapy, the following is what the patient can expect:

1. The first visit will consist of the evaluation. During the evaluation, the physical therapist will take a detailed medical history; assess your condition and capabilities; and perform tests that will reveal problems with range of motion, flexibility, strength, posture, endurance, respiratory function and body mechanics.
2. The following visits will consist of special exercises for strength, flexibility, and range of motion. The patient will be given some of these exercises to do at home as well. Performing these exercises consistently will be the foundation to the patient's treatment plan.
3. The patient will see the physical therapist at every visit. During this visit, the therapist will perform specific techniques to increase functional mobility. These techniques may include joint mobilizations, manipulations, rhythmic stabilization, neuromuscular stretching, and, of course, patient education.
4. The visit typically concludes with a modality such as heat, ice, or electrical stimulation to help reduce discomfort and/or swelling.

The patient will learn not only about his/her disease and how to cope with it on a day-to-day basis, but also to recognize the times when he/she needs to rest. The patient will learn to make safe and reasonable decisions about activities that may aggravate flare-ups, which will enable the patient to make proper choices and to maintain a greater degree of control over life.

Arthritis often changes a person's quality of life. Our goal at PRI is to educate each person that walks through our door. We want every patient to leave with a comprehensive understanding of his/her condition and the steps it will take to manage it. Once the patient commits to these steps and desires this change, every employee at PRI will guide, support and encourage the patient towards his/her goals. We are here to help you achieve a better quality of life. This is our service to you.

**The health information contained herein is provided for educational purposes only and is not intended to replace discussions with a healthcare provider. Decisions regarding patient care must be made with a healthcare provider, considering the unique characteristics of the patient.**

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