

# Taking CONTROL

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## BONE HEALTH



## Arthritis Isn't a Singular Condition

**A**rthritis is not just one disease; it refers to pain or disease affecting the joints. There are over 100 types of arthritis and related conditions. The most common types include osteoarthritis (OA), rheumatoid arthritis (RA), psoriatic arthritis (PsA), fibromyalgia, and gout.

Although arthritis is not solely a disease of aging, certain types of arthritis are more common in older adults than in younger individuals. When arthritis occurs in children under the age of 16, it is referred to as juvenile arthritis.

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## Finding the Right Answer

Answers are all over the place. Are you ready for accurate information?

### **I have knee arthritis, and I've been advised that squatting is off-limits for me. Is this true?**

Telling people with knee arthritis to avoid squatting often comes from a good intention to prevent pain. However, squatting is a natural part of our everyday life; we need it to get up from a chair, use the toilet, exit a low car, or rise from the ground. Successful squatting requires proper alignment of the hip, knee, and ankle. It also demands strength not only in the muscles around the knee but also in the calf and hip muscles.

Proper squatting is a coordinated effort involving multiple joints and various muscle groups.

So, if you have knee arthritis, should you squat? Yes! To ensure you perform squats safely and effectively, consider seeking guidance from a fitness or physical therapy professional to teach your body how to perform squats correctly.

### **Strengthening exercises will put too much strain on my arthritic joint, potentially making it worse?**

Let's think of our joints as bridges connecting our bones. These bridges need to be sturdy and able to support weight. As we age, the ligaments holding our joints can loosen, the cartilage can wear down, and the discs can shrink, leading to less stable joints.

What does this mean for exercise? Your posture and how you position your joints are very important while moving. Strong muscles help keep your joints stable and support your ligaments. Think about the

Golden Gate Bridge. If it swayed while you drove across it, you wouldn't trust it. Like a bridge that sags under too much weight, our joints need strong muscles to stay stable when lifting things. This strength is essential for activities like carrying groceries, vacuuming, or going up and down stairs. When exercising to improve arthritis, focus on controlling your body weight, lifting weights you can handle, and reducing the number of exercises to prevent your joints from being unstable or overloaded.

### **To find relief from my condition, only anti-inflammatory medication or a joint replacement can help.**

Effective anti-inflammatory medications are available by prescription and over the counter. However, they can cause side effects, and some individuals may struggle metabolizing them. For others, they may work well in the short term, but long-term use can harm the liver and digestive system.

Joint replacements can alleviate pain and improve function, but not all joints can be replaced. Many patients underestimate the rehabilitation required and the recovery time involved. Alternatives include steroid injections, platelet-rich plasma therapy, stem cell injections, and arthroscopic surgery. We wouldn't be in the fitness and rehabilitation business if we didn't believe that proper physical therapy treatment followed by prescribed strengthening and mobility were the best anti-inflammatory options.

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### **Additional complementary strategies that can enhance treatment:**

1. **Anti-inflammatory diet**
2. **Management of mental health**
3. **Adequate hydration: Aim for 6-8 cups (8 oz each) of liquid daily; increase this amount if you are active or in hot conditions.**
4. **Good sleeping habits: Strive for 7-8 hours of sleep, including 4-5 hours of uninterrupted deep sleep.**
5. **Compression garments, bracing, and taping**
6. **Topical treatments such as Arnica gel, Icy Hot, or Biofreeze**
7. **Heat or ice**
8. **Massage**
9. **TENS (Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation) devices**
10. **Traction or decompression methods**

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## Arthritis means that the cartilage in my joints is entirely gone, which is why I experience pain.

Yes, bone-on-bone arthritis can be very painful. When the cartilage wears away, the exposed bone has many nerve endings, leading to significant pain, especially during impact. Most of the time, inflammation causes the pain. It helps to learn which activities raise inflammation and how to manage those activities through modifications and strengthening exercises, especially when arthritis comes from wear and tear or injury.

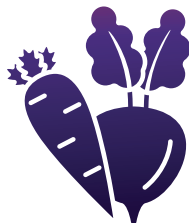
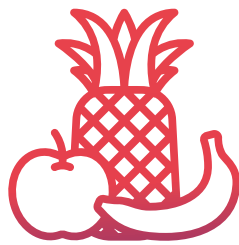
Other types of inflammation can also affect arthritis and may come from broader health issues. Conditions like diabetes, thyroid problems, and autoimmune diseases can increase inflammation. Our diet can influence inflammation levels. It's important to keep our joints moving and muscles strong, but managing chronic diseases and eating an anti-inflammatory diet can greatly improve joint pain.

## Nutrition for Inflammation

Alissa Mick, MS, RDN, LD

**W**hether you manage arthritis or aim to keep your joints happy, the foods you eat make a big difference! This guide will help you choose foods backed by research that protect your joints, reduce inflammation, and improve mobility—one bite at a time!

Inflammation is a key driver of arthritis pain and stiffness, but here's the good news: research demonstrates that filling your plate with colorful plants, healthy fats, and lean protein can help reduce inflammation, ease discomfort, and improve mobility. A diet rich in these anti-inflammatory foods can lower inflammatory markers, reduce flare-ups, and even help slow the progression or onset of arthritis. So, let's eat to move better, feel better, and keep those joints dancing!



### Focus on Anti-Inflammatory Foods:

- **Vegetables (tomatoes, broccoli, and green leafy greens like spinach and kale)**
- **Fruits (berries, oranges, cherries)**
- **Whole Grains (oats, quinoa, brown rice)**
- **Healthy Fats (avocado, olive oil and nuts like pistachios and almonds)**
- **Omega-3s (salmon, sardines, flaxseed, chia, walnuts)**
- **Herbs & Spices (turmeric, ginger, garlic)**
- **Beans & Legumes (lentils, red kidney beans, pinto beans, chickpeas)**

### Nutrition Action Plan

- **Include omega-3s 2-3x/week**
- **Get 15 minutes of sunlight (or supplement vitamin D)**
- **Add at least one anti-inflammatory food to each meal**
- **Build your plate: Protein + Produce + Healthy Fat**

### About Alissa Mick, MS, RDN, LD

As a Registered Dietitian specializing in performance and sports nutrition, she is dedicated to helping individuals learn how to properly fuel their bodies and develop a healthier relationship with food and their bodies. Her mission is to provide evidence-based, holistic nutrition guidance to create sustainable and personalized nutrition plans to support her clients' unique goals and lifestyles.

Alissa holds a Master's degree in Nutrition, Dietetics, and Sensory Sciences, and a Bachelor of Science in Dietetics with a minor in Kinesiology. Contact her at [alissamick@protonmail.com](mailto:alissamick@protonmail.com)

### Make today a beginning!

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