

## Don't Take Pain Lying Down!

### Gentle Exercise Greatly Improves Muscle and Bone Pain

It may seem counterintuitive to move more when experiencing pain in your muscles and bones. However, the exercises discussed here are gentle on your joints when performed slowly and deliberately. As always, discuss with your primary care provider to determine what's best for you before starting a new exercise program.

#### Yoga

Yoga is an ancient practice that originated in India. It involves movement, meditation and breathing techniques to promote mental and physical well-being. What sets yoga apart from most other exercise programs is that it places as great an emphasis on mental fitness as on physical fitness – the mind-body connection. Regular yoga practice can promote endurance, strength, calmness, flexibility and well-being.



Yoga can help people suffering from arthritis, fibromyalgia, migraine, low back pain and many other painful conditions. A study published in *Annals of Internal Medicine* found that a weekly yoga class increased mobility among people with chronic low back pain more than standard medical care.

Another study, that included more than 1,600 participants, determined that yoga improved daily function among people with fibromyalgia osteoporosis-related curvature of the spine. Practicing yoga also improved mood and psychosocial well-being.

#### Tai Chi

Tai chi is a low-impact, slow-motion, mind-body exercise that combines breath control, meditation and movements to stretch and strengthen muscles. Tai chi supports or improves balance, coordination, flexibility, muscle strength, stamina and helps ease chronic pain.

The *Journal of Rheumatology* published a study demonstrating the effectiveness of tai chi on women with osteoarthritis. A group of women with osteoarthritis who practiced tai chi for 12 weeks were compared with a group with similar characteristics, which only received standard treatment. The group that practiced tai chi had 30% less pain, and 30% improved their ability to carry out their daily activities.

#### Pilates

Over the past decade, Pilates has changed from being exclusively used by dancers to becoming popular in the mainstream exercise arena and injury rehabilitation. Pilates is frequently prescribed to people with low back pain due to its focus on activating the stabilizing muscles of the trunk and lower back (also known as the

“core.”) Traditional principles of Pilates include centering, concentration, control, precision, flow and breathing.

Pilates offers more significant pain, and functional ability improvements compared to usual care and physical activity in the short term and provides equivalent improvements to massage therapy and other forms of exercise.

#### Stretching Exercises

Stretching can relieve tension and stiffness if you have chronic pain in your lower back or neck. The following stretches improve overall mobility and facilitate proper movement.



#### Low back and glute stretch

- Lie on your back on the floor
- Bring your knees towards your chest
- Wrap your arms around your knees
- Give yourself a gentle hug
- Rock side to side, feeling a stretch through your hips and low back

#### Levator scapula (muscle situated at the back and side of the neck) stretch

- Stand or sit beside a door
- Raise your elbow above the shoulder on the side you want to stretch
- Rest your elbow against the door jam. This will rotate the outside of the shoulder blade up
- Next, turn your head away from that side and bring your head to look down
- Gently deepen the stretch by placing your free hand on top of your head and applying slight pressure

#### Walking

It might seem hard to believe that walking with painful joints can actually help reduce the pain. But movement helps lessen the pain and damage of arthritis in several ways. If you have joint pain due to arthritis, consider the “Building a Walking Workout” or “Walk with Ease” programs recommended by the Arthritis Foundation.

As you can see, gentle movement, stretching and walking can significantly improve your quality of life if you suffer from chronic musculoskeletal pain. Make it a point to start healing today.



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### 2023 Benefits Open Enrollment Is Coming!

October 11-31, 2022

#### Open Enrollment Tip #2!

#### Have Open Enrollment Questions?

Join us for a Benefits Information Session—details are below. See you there!

#### Thursday, October 13

10 a.m. – 3 p.m.

#### Stroger Hospital

1969 W. Ogden Ave.  
Lower-Level Cafeteria  
Chicago, IL 60612

#### Tuesday, October 18

10 a.m. – 3 p.m.

#### Juvenile Temporary Detention Center

Auditorium  
1100 S. Hamilton Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60612

#### Thursday, October 20

10 a.m. – 3 p.m.

#### County Building

118 N. Clark St.  
4th Floor Conference Rooms  
A & B  
Chicago, IL 60602

#### Friday, October 21

10 a.m. – 3 p.m.

#### Criminal Courts Building

2650 S. California Ave.  
2nd Floor Cafeteria  
Chicago, IL 60608

**DON'T FORGET OCTOBER 11-31 TO PICK.CLICK.ENROLL!**



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