

Things You Should Do in Your 20s to Prevent Arthritis in Your 60s

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Arthritis, aka joint inflammation, affects nearly a quarter of adults in the US, amounting to around 53.2 million individuals, according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#). Not surprisingly, the US has earned one of the top spots among the countries with the highest prevalence of arthritis worldwide.

That brings us to the burning question: Is there a way to put a stop to this public health problem? Well, yes and no. Specific arthritis causes, such as aging, gender, or family history, are beyond our control. However, it is possible to protect your joints from early wear and tear and reduce the risk of developing the disease by making better health choices in your younger years.

Yes, we're referring to exercising, healthy eating, and the like. What may seem like 'sacrifices' now will pay off in the long run—not only for preventing arthritis but also for keeping other diseases at bay. When you're still energetic and functional in your 60s, you'll thank your 20s self for choosing an active lifestyle over a sedentary one, opting for water over carbonated drinks, and embracing coping methods like yoga instead of smoking.

If you don't want to be 1 in 5 adults in the US living with arthritis, carefully review the checklist below and get started on your journey towards healthy living today!

1. Watch your weight

Why? Because your lower limb joints, including the hips, knees, and ankles, bear all (in fact, more) of your weight during activities such as standing, walking, running, jumping, or lifting objects. The impact on your knees when you walk is 1.5 times your body weight, which cranks up to [4-7 times your body weight when you run](#). In short, there is a direct correlation between your weight and joint health.

Naturally, being overweight or obese puts extra pressure and stress on the weight-bearing joints, speeding up their wear and tear. Moreover, excess body weight increases chronic inflammation throughout the body, including the joints in other body parts. The consequence? Arthritis, of course. So, maintaining a healthy weight should be your top priority to keep your joints healthy!

2. Give good thought to what you eat

The golden rules of healthy eating are straightforward: maintain a balanced diet and cut down on junk food. Yet, when it comes to arthritis prevention, you must introduce specific foods to your everyday diet to meet two goals: preventing inflammation and strengthening joints.

[Anti-inflammatory foods](#) such as turmeric, fatty fish, olive oil, flaxseed oil, nuts and seeds, cruciferous vegetables, citrus fruits, dark chocolate, and Omega-3 supplements are excellent for combating inflammation. As for strengthening joints, go for foods rich in calcium, Vitamin D, Vitamin C, and antioxidants.

3. Take part in routine physical activities

Think about this: What happens to mechanical tools when you don't use them for a while? They rust, corrode, become difficult to move, and lose effectiveness. When you live a sedentary lifestyle, your joints undergo similar changes: they become stiff, painful, and lose strength. The solution? Physical activity!

You don't have to restrict yourself to gym workouts if that's not your preference. The idea is to be active for at least [30 minutes every day](#). How you spend that time is up to you! Go out for a walk or run to your local park. Cycle around your neighborhood or take up swimming. For more fun physical activities, you can sign up for weekend hikes, do a dance workout, or join a sport.

Mix your cardio workouts with strength training exercises such as push-ups, squats, lunges, glute bridge, plank, and more. When ready, introduce weights to your exercise regimen to amp things up. Flexibility and balance exercises are also needed for joint functioning! So, enrolling in a yYoga or pilates class is the best gift you can give your joints.

4. Be careful not to injure yourself

While physical activity can strengthen your joints, failure to take [proper precautions](#) can lead to severe joint injuries. It can impact a joint's normal structure and function, potentially increasing the risk of arthritis development later in life.

If you engage in high-intensity exercises, invest in cushioned sports shoes that effectively absorb impact and protect the joints. Appropriate safety equipment, such as elbow support, wrist guards, and knee pads, is crucial when playing sports that directly impact these body parts.

Following the correct training form and techniques can also go a long way in preventing injuries. Whatever happens, never skip warm-up, cool-down, and rest days!

5. If your profession poses a risk to your joints...

...then, you must take [proactive steps](#) to work around a solution. For instance, if you are an assembly line worker performing repetitive tasks, you must give your joints a break from time to time. Do you have a desk job where you're sitting and typing all day long? Ensure an [ergonomic set-up](#), and remember to get up every hour to stretch. Are you a construction worker needing to lift heavy objects? Do it the right way—squat, maintain good posture, and pick up the object slowly instead of bending forward from your back and risking injury.

6. Say goodbye to smoking

Quitting smoking is the new cool, and for all the right reasons. While the overall health benefits of kicking the habit are plenty, what is its connection with arthritis? Well, [smoking is known to cause inflammation](#) in the body, which is a risk factor for developing joint disease. Plus, it is often clustered with other negative behaviors such as physical inactivity, consumption of alcohol, and poor diet, all of which are a recipe for disaster. It can cause conditions like obesity and diabetes, setting the stage for arthritis later in life. So, smoking cigarettes is an absolute no-no!

7. Make water your drink of choice

Around 70% of the human body is made up of water! It's a no-brainer then that proper hydration is essential for the body. When talking about joints specifically, they are surrounded by protective connective tissues called cartilage, which comprise [80% water](#). Synovial fluid, a thick liquid composed of water and other substances, goes around these joints and tissues, lubricating them, reducing friction between bones, and keeping them functioning normally. Think of it like motor oil lubricating engine parts to prevent damage! In conclusion, you must stay hydrated to [maintain joint health](#).

8. Alcohol...in moderation, please!

Researchers have found that chronic [heavy drinking affects joint health](#) in two ways. First up, alcohol promotes inflammation throughout the body, which is a direct precursor to arthritis. Second, alcohol is a diuretic, which dehydrates the body, impacting cartilage and synovial

fluid that keeps the joints cushioned and lubricated. It means monitoring your alcohol intake is essential, and if you can quit the habit, nothing like it! A doctor can advise you on how much alcohol is safe for you to consume.

9. Take care of your well-being

Do you know what else causes inflammation in the body, increasing the risk of arthritis? Chronic stress. The truth is that everyday stressors are inevitable. You cannot change the traffic on the road or your nagging boss. Neither can you evade caregiving duties, household chores, paying bills, or upcoming deadlines.

What you can do, though, is practice [stress management techniques](#) to remain calm and composed when life throws difficulties at you. The idea here is to do activities that increase the feel-good hormones in your body and put you in a happy mood. Take a walk, lift weights, watch comedy movies, cook a meal and enjoy it with your loved ones, listen to music, write a gratitude journal, video call a friend, cuddle with your pets, get a massage, practice a hobby, learn a new skill—do anything that puts you in the groove! You can introduce strategies such as a good sleep schedule, meditation, breathing exercises, and yoga to your everyday routine for long-term benefits.

10. Make your doctor your best friend

We all know that prevention is better than cure. Yet, we seldom put it into practice, skip annual check-ups, and only seek medical attention when we face symptoms affecting our daily lives. However, many conditions are asymptomatic and can only be detected through routine physical exams, relevant diagnostic tests, and health screenings. Moreover, a doctor who knows your medical and family history can provide you with tailored exercise programs, diet plans, and other lifestyle recommendations to safeguard your lifelong well-being. [Partner with a primary care doctor](#) earlier in life and take charge of your health!

Are the number of lifestyle changes overwhelming? We've got you!

Arthritis prevention is a lifelong process, and setting sustainable goals is crucial to staying committed. That means no one expects you to switch from an unhealthy to a healthy lifestyle in a day! It's overly ambitious and practically impossible to achieve. Instead, introduce one or two positive habits at a time, and when you succeed, move on to the rest. You got this, buddy!