

Don't let Joint Pain Take You Out of the Fast Lane of Life

Joint pain can be a pain in the neck – whether it's in your shoulder, knee, hip, back or any other of the 230 joints in your body. Besides the sharp, nagging or radiating pain it can cause, it can stop you from doing what you want – and need – to do. While pain can come from the normal wear and tear on joints, it can also result from a single traumatic event, such as a fall. Keeping your joints healthy at any age is important for injury prevention.

Preventing Injury, Promoting Joint Health

Many people can sidestep pain and injury by keeping their joints healthy. Your joint health strategy depends on your genetics, age and level of activity.

“If Dad had a knee replacement or if Mom had both hips replaced, arthritis probably runs in the family,” says Shawn Mills, MD, orthopedic surgeon at Morton Hospital. “Of course, you have no control over your genetics, but you can control the other major factor in keeping your joints healthy – conditioning.”

Preparing for an activity is important and requires conditioning. Typically, two strength training activities a week will help you maintain your strength.

Everyday Joint Health

Not all worthwhile joint health activities involve sports. Many are waiting right outside your door. Yard work – raking, pruning, planting – is excellent exercise. But if you haven't been exercising, your back may be in no condition to work in your yard for eight hours and you're better off doing these activities for 20 minutes at a time.

Other low-impact activities that promote joint health include: ballroom or line dancing; yoga, for balance and flexibility; taking the stairs whenever possible; and walking 30 minutes a day.

A Wellness Approach

If you do experience a joint injury or pain, education, physical therapy, pain management, and orthopedic care are typical approaches to treatment. Joint pain doesn't always mean that you need a surgery. In fact, the majority will not need an operation.

“Don't assume you need surgery and let that stop you from seeking help. People have a lot of options,” says Dr. Mills. “But as people get older, joint replacement can help maintain your activity level. It's a common treatment option for the baby boomer crowd and for younger adults with conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis.”

And the number of joint replacement surgeries performed each year is predicted to skyrocket. By 2030, hip replacement surgeries could soar to 572,000 and total knee replacements may reach an astounding 3.48 million.*

“When it comes down to it, you don’t have to endure joint pain,” says Dr. Mills. “Talk to your doctor about what options are available and best for you.”

Dr. Shawn Mills is an orthopedic surgeon affiliated with Morton Hospital. He is now accepting new patients in Raynham. To learn more or request an appointment, call Steward DoctorFinder at 800-488-5959.

* Source: “Total Knee and Hip Replacement Surgery Projections Show Meteoric Rise by 2030,” American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons.