

Muscle Strengthening

Muscles keep your joints moving properly and protect them from injury, especially when you are active e.g. playing with friends or doing sport.

If your joints are or have been swollen, they will need extra help from their surrounding muscles to keep them protected.

Here are some tips on how keep your muscles strong:

1. It is important to concentrate on the specific muscles supporting your joints that have been sore. We can give you individual exercises for these muscles, have a look at some of the examples below.
2. You should aim to do each exercise 10 times and your muscles should feel tired after doing them – not painful.
 - If the muscles aren't tired then a small weight or exercise band could be added.
 - If you can't manage 10, do what you can and remember to talk about it with us.
 - Remember, strengthening isn't about lifting the heaviest weight possible - it's about skill and control.
3. Try to do your exercises five times a week if you want to get stronger, or three times if you want to keep up your strength.
4. Carrying on with your exercises during times when your arthritis is active is very important. If you have hot, swollen joints or a history of neck arthritis ask us about the best exercises to do.
5. Other activities which make you feel warm and out of breath will also strengthen your body as well as improving your fitness (*link to fitness page*). But we may ask you to strengthen particular joints before going back to your other activities. This is to make sure your joints are protected and strong.

Examples of some of the exercises we might ask to you do:

Muscles at the back of your hips (your gluts):

1. Lie on your tummy
 2. Slowly kicking alternate legs (as if swimming)
 3. Keep your hips flat all the time.
- *Make it harder by holding each leg up for 3 seconds.

Muscles at the side of your hips (your abductors)

1. Lie on your side
 2. Lift you top leg as high as you can, taking it slightly out behind you
- * Don't roll forwards or backwards and try to keep your hips stacked on top of each other

Muscles at the front of your knee (your quads):

1. Place a rolled towel or soft toy under you knee
 2. Use your knee muscles to push your thigh down into the toy, (your heel should lift up).
- *Hold for 3 seconds to make it more difficult

Ankles:

1. Stand with your heels over the edge of a step
2. Rise up on your tiptoes as high as possible
(You might need to use your hands to balance at first, but try to use them less each time)