

INFORMATION

information

Arthritis

VICTORIA

inc. OSTEOPOROSIS VICTORIA

5 STEPS TO BETTER HEALTH AND REDUCED RISK OF ARTHRITIS AND OSTEOPOROSIS

1. Eat a healthy diet designed to promote health and protect bones

- Healthy eating is vital for good health and immunity to disease.
- Aim to eat a variety of foods (see diagram below). Include plenty of calcium rich foods to promote healthy bones. For example, dairy foods, calcium enriched soy products sardines, salmon and nuts.
- Practice safe food preparation and storage hygiene. This will help prevent bacterial infection through contaminated food, which can lead to the development of some forms of arthritis.
- Having adequate Vitamin D levels is important for healthy bones. Most adults who go outside (into sunlight) make sufficient Vitamin D. Those who are confined inside

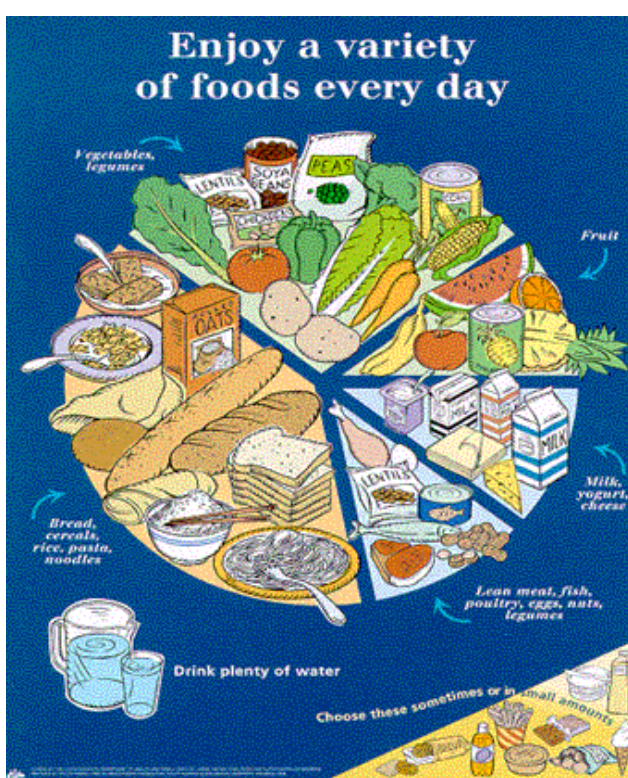
may need to discuss taking a supplement with their doctor.

2. Maintain your ideal weight

- One of the major risk factors for developing osteoarthritis is being overweight.
- Arthritis often develops in the weight-bearing joints. The heavier you are, the greater stress on your weight bearing joints, such as knees or hip joints.
- Being underweight may increase the likelihood of osteoporosis in pre menopausal women particularly if low body weight results in an interruption to the menstrual cycle.

3. Aim to be physically active

- Regular, appropriate physical activity will maintain the strength and flexibility of joints and promote the health of cartilage which is the shock absorbing substance in joints.
- A balanced exercise program includes strengthening, flexibility and aerobic exercises. Exercise which promotes good posture, balance and coordination are also vital.
- For those who have arthritis, strong muscles help to support damaged joints and can help to manage pain and improve function.
- Appropriate weight bearing exercise can strengthen bones and help to prevent osteoporosis.
- Start at the level at which you currently exercise and aim to gradually increase the time. 30 minutes of moderate intensity exercise a day on most days of the week is the recommended goal (this can be accumulated in 10 minute sessions). More



intense strength training may further improve bone health.

- Other health benefits include the reduction in risk of heart disease, diabetes, colon cancer, high blood pressure, falls and fractures. Importantly, physical activity can be fun and makes you feel better. Join an exercise group and also enjoy the company of others.

4. Prevent and treat injuries

- Choose an appropriate sport for yourself giving consideration to your age, fitness level, past injuries and any risk factors. For example, jogging is not recommended for people with osteoarthritis of the weight bearing joints.
- It is important to reduce the risk of injuries as cartilage damage can lead to secondary arthritis.
- To reduce the risk of injury: Warm up by exercising at a low pace *before every exercise session*, and *cool down afterwards* including gentle stretching.
- Reduce the risk of falls. Flat or low heeled shoes which offer good support and have a non-slip sole may reduce the risk of falls. Consider consulting a Physiotherapist for advice on balance exercise and walking aides if you are unsteady. Can promote both improved balance and muscle strength. An Occupational Therapist can assist with home safety considerations. Contact your Community Health Centre for referral to these health professionals.

5. Ensure full recovery after injury

- Treat joint injuries promptly. Ensure rest, apply ice, compression and elevate to reduce swelling. Seek advice from health professionals about the rate of return to activities involving the injured joint.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Resource Centre

**All listed books are available on loan from the Arthritis Victoria Resource Centre to members. If you would like to find out more about becoming a member call: (03) 8531 8000.*

Savage, Gayle et al 2001, *Agefit: Fitness and nutrition for an independent future*, Pan Macmillan Australia, Sydney, NSW.

St George, Francine 1999, *Bodyworks: Daily helpful hints to keep irritating aches and pains away*, ABC Books, Sydney, NSW.

Awerbuch, Mark 2001, *Live longer live stronger: An exercise and lifestyle program for over 40's*, McGraw-Hill, Sydney, NSW

Saxelby, Catherine 2002, *Nutrition for life: Everything you need to know about food and nutrition*, Hardie Grant Books, South Yarra.

Nelson, Miriam E and Knipe, Judy 2001, *Strong women eat well: Nutritional strategies for a healthy body and mind*, G.P Putnam's Sons, New York NY.

Walk with ease: Your guide to walking for better health, improved fitness and less pain 2003, Arthritis Foundation of America, Atlanta, GA.

ARTHRITIS VICTORIA

If you would like further information please contact our telephone information service on

(03) 8531 8000 or 1800 011 041 (country callers)



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Prepared by Education & Services staff, Arthritis Victoria, February 2004. This material is for your information and is not intended to be medical advice. You are encouraged to review the information provided with your doctor or relevant health professional.