

There are two basic types of arthritis, degenerative and inflammatory. Degenerative arthritis is the most common and is caused by a gradual wearing down of a joint, often in response to accumulated injuries. Smoking and poor diet can also lead to development of this type of arthritis.

Inflammatory arthritis is related to immune dysfunction where your own immune system attacks the tissues of the body. The most common of these is rheumatoid arthritis (RA). Whereas degenerative arthritis tends to develop later in life, RA can develop at any age. Typically individuals with RA have bouts where the condition flairs up and movement of the affected joint can be quite painful. At other times the discomfort can go away completely or be significantly reduced.

As the disease advances, most people become more and more sedentary, since movement can be painful. Doctors often advise patients with RA to take it easy and to avoid activities that aggravate the pain. One of the problems with inactivity is that the muscles weaken and atrophy. This leads to even more disability.

Recent research conducted in the United Kingdom has revealed that activity may be just what the doctor ordered, or should have! In this study, intense weight training was performed by a group of RA sufferers. The study found that physical function among those lifting weights improved by 20 to 30%. Strength increased over 100%. These improvements were so profound that these RA patients outperformed other individuals in the same age range who did not suffer from the disease.

More and more we see that exercise is good for you, regardless of the disease or condition that you might suffer with.