KITA SUGG
Exercise Physiology

Rheumatoid Arthritis: Keep Moving Even on the Tough Days

Enjoyable Movement for Every Body

Living with rheumatoid arthritis (RA) can be unpredictable.

Some days your joints may feel comfortable and move with ease, while on other days pain, stiffness and fatigue can make even simple tasks feel challenging.

It can be tempting to avoid movement altogether, especially during a flare-up. However, appropriate exercise is one of the most effective ways to help manage rheumatoid arthritis.

The goal isn't to push through pain.

The goal is to keep your joints moving, maintain your strength and support your ability to do the things you enjoy.

Why Movement Matters

When your joints are painful, resting can feel like the safest option.

While extra rest may be appropriate during a significant flare-up, avoiding movement for long periods can lead to:

- Increased stiffness.
- Reduced muscle strength.
- Loss of joint mobility.
- Reduced confidence with movement.
- Difficulty completing everyday tasks.

Gentle, regular movement helps maintain joint mobility, strengthen the muscles around your joints and support your overall health.

The key is learning how to adjust your exercise to match how you're feeling.

Disclaimer: This information is general in nature and not a substitute for individual medical advice. Always consult your healthcare provider before starting any new exercise program.

How Exercise Can Help

Regular exercise can help:

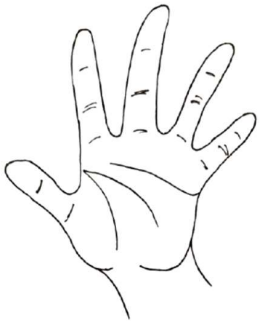
- Maintain joint mobility
- Improve muscle strength
- Reduce stiffness
- Improve balance and stability
- Support heart and bone health
- Reduce fatigue
- Improve confidence with movement
- Help you continue doing everyday activities

Exercise should be tailored to your symptoms, goals and current ability.

Some days you may be able to do more, while other days you may need to reduce the intensity or focus on gentle movement. Both are completely fine.

Simple Movements to get started

Hand Open and Close



Helps support:

Hand mobility and grip function.

How to perform:

Open your fingers as wide as feels comfortable. Slowly close your hand into a gentle fist. Repeat slowly.



Aim for:

10 repetitions.

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Calf Raises

Helps support:

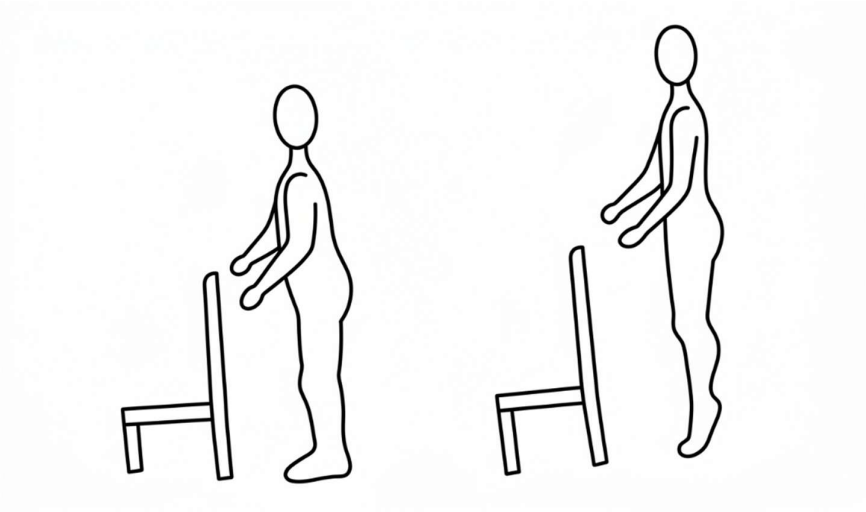
Lower leg strength and balance.

How to perform:

Stand behind a chair and hold on lightly for support. Lift your heels off the ground until your weight is on the balls of your feet. Pause and then lower with control.

Aim for:

10–15 repetitions.



Seated Knee Extensions

Helps support:

Thigh strength and knee function.

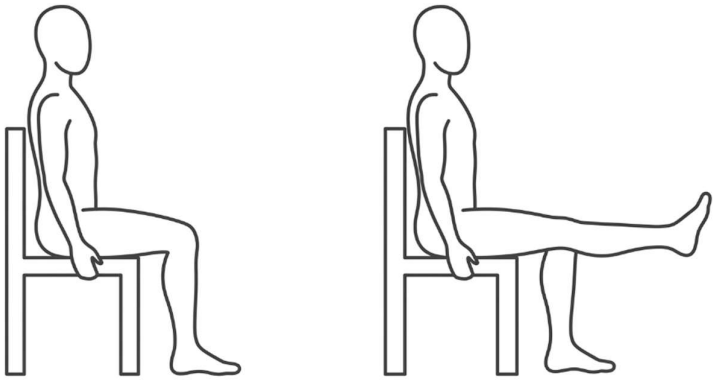
How to perform:

Sit upright in a sturdy chair with your feet on the ground. Slowly extend your leg to as close to straight as you can get and pause briefly. Lower with control. Repeat for desired/ prescribed number of repetitions and then perform on the other leg.

Aim for:

8–12 repetitions each leg.

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Helpful Tips

Flare-ups are a normal part of living with rheumatoid arthritis.

Rather than stopping all movement, it can be helpful to adjust your activity.

During a flare-up you might:

✓ Choose gentler exercises.

✓ Reduce the number of repetitions.

✓ Take more rest breaks.

✓ Focus on range of movement exercises.

✓ Gradually return to your usual program as symptoms settle.

Listening to your body is important but remember that some gentle movement is often better than none.

How an Exercise Physiologist Can Help

If Rheumatoid Arthritis is affecting your life an Accredited Exercise Physiologist can help you understand what exercises are appropriate and develop an exercise program tailored to your symptoms.

To book a personalised Exercise Physiology session with Kita visit www.kitasuggphysiology.com.au

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