

Advice for Runners with Joint Problems

We have several patients who have degenerative joint disease (osteoarthritis) that enjoy running. Running and other high impact activities are not the best exercise choice for patients with osteoarthritis as it may cause further degeneration of the joint and may lead to needing a joint replacement sooner. However, there are things you can do to try to reduce the stress on your joints while still enjoying running as a form of exercise.

Here is some advice that we give to our patients who would like to continue running after being diagnosed with osteoarthritis.

1. Change your running shoes every few months to maintain adequate cushion in your shoes.
2. We would encourage you to cross train instead of running multiple days each week. Rotate your exercises between running, biking, elliptical, lifting weights, Pilates and/or yoga. Cross training reduces the amount of time each week that the joints are exposed to high impact loading activities.
3. We often encourage our patients to try biking or using an exercise bike instead of running using the Lance Armstrong method to keep their heart rate in the aerobic zone. Lance Armstrong's method of cycling reduces lactic acid buildup in the muscles by trying to utilize different muscle groups when some fatigue. We encourage you to wear a heart rate monitor while biking to maintain your heart rate in the aerobic zone throughout your workout. As lactic acid starts to build up in your quadriceps, try to recruit other muscles to maintain that target heart rate. You can try "throwing your knees through the handlebars" which recruits your hip flexors. You can try "scraping the gum off your shoes" which recruits your hamstrings and

gluteal muscles. You can get up off the seat which recruits your trunk, torso, and arms. By utilizing different muscle groups after some fatigue, it is easier to maintain that target aerobic heart rate which can often give you that "runners high" at the end of your workout.

4. You could also try taking glucosamine and chondroitin which are supplements that can be found over the counter. Glucosamine and chondroitin are naturally occurring compounds that are found in the cartilage of joints. Studies have demonstrated modest benefits in arthritic pain by taking these supplements. We would recommend glucosamine sulfate 1,500 mg and chondroitin sulfate 1,200 mg daily.