

Keeping active with arthritis

Evidence suggests that strengthening the muscles that support our joints can be hugely beneficial in reducing the symptoms of arthritis. As we get older, it becomes more difficult to build muscles. However, research conducted by the BBC in association with Dr Phillip Atherton of the University of Nottingham has now shown that the right kind of exercises can slow or even reverse the natural age related decline in muscle mass without visiting the gym.

In a study reported on the BBC's 'Trust me I'm a Doctor' programme, 12 volunteers were asked to repeat a series of exercises 12 times, 3 times per day. At the end of the 4-week study, on average, the volunteer's muscles were 3% bigger, which equates to a 13% improvement in strength and power.

A common reason people give for not doing exercises is a lack of time. These exercises are specially designed to be conducted without having to take time out of your normal daily activities.

If you feel that you probably need to do more exercises, but don't know where to start, try these for yourself and make a commitment to your future health.

Watch the video: <http://bit.ly/physactivityBBC>

These exercises are intended to be gentle. However, if you have any concerns about whether they are suitable for you, please consult a healthcare professional before taking part.

For more information, visit: www.arthritisaction.org.uk



Wall press-ups

- Stand facing a wall with your feet hip width apart about 2 feet away from the wall
- Place your hands against the wall, slightly wider than shoulder-width apart
- Keep your body straight and slowly bend your elbows, lowering your chest to the wall, until your upper arms are almost parallel with the wall
- Return to the start position
- **PROGRESSION** - move your feet 6 inches further back



Toothbrush Squat

- Stand with feet shoulder width apart
- Bend your knees as if to sit on an imaginary chair. Don't let your knees extend in front of your toes
- **WHEN-** try this when brushing your teeth
- **PROGRESSION-** make the squat lower or hold the squat at the bottom for longer



The vacuum lunge

- Step forwards with one leg
- Lower your body slowly by bending your knee as shown in the diagram. Be careful with your balance
- Keep your torso upright during the lunge. Don't let your front knee extend in front of your toes
- **WHEN:** Try this when doing the vacuuming or brushing the floor
- **PROGRESSION -** hold for longer or perform the exercise whilst holding a 1kg weight in each hand

Cleaning calf raise



- Stand tall with your stomach muscles tensed and your feet hip width apart
- Raise your heels so that you're on your tiptoes
- Hold the position for 2 seconds, and then slowly lower your heels to the floor
- Ensure that the lift comes from the whole width of your foot and not one side of the foot
- **WHEN** - try this when wiping the dishes
- **PROGRESSION** - make the raises slower and the hold at the top longer. Alternatively, add a weight to each hand (for example, a 1L bottle of water)



Water bottle biceps curls

- Stand up straight with a full 1L plastic water bottle in each hand. Start with the hands by your sides, palms facing forwards
- Keep your elbows close to your sides and bend the elbows till your hands are close to shoulder level
- Slowly return to the starting position
- **PROGRESSION** - increase the weights





Washing basket twist

- Standing up straight, hold a washing basket, or other similar weighted object in both hands with your arms at your sides and hands positioned just above your waist
- Twist your body to one side while keeping your hips facing forward
- Repeat by twisting to the other side
- **WHEN** - try this when unloading the washing machine
- **PROGRESSION** - increase the weight of the object



Towel triceps extensions

- Stand up straight with feet roughly hip distance apart
- Hold a towel behind your back as demonstrated in the picture
- Slowly raise and lower the towel between your hands as if drying your back
- **WHEN** - try this after a shower or bath
- **PROGRESSION** - increase the number of repetitions
- **CAUTION** - take care with this exercise. It may not be appropriate for you if you have shoulder arthritis