

Sex, Intimacy and Arthritis



Relationship Challenges

In any relationship there may be physical reasons and emotional factors including stress that can impact all aspects of the relationship including your sex life.

Living with arthritis may:

- Affect your mood and self-esteem
- Reduce your enjoyment of sex and other activities and interests that you share with a partner, particularly because of pain and fatigue issues
- The physical changes that can be part of arthritis may affect your self-confidence and self-esteem

Tips To Overcome These Challenges:

Communicate with your partner:

- Your issues and concerns so you can work at overcoming problems together - this helps you connect and improve your sex life
- Emotional intimacy, including trust, openness and honesty are an important part of a relationship



Get Fit:

- Staying active is important for developing and maintaining muscle strength and joint mobility
- It's also helpful for managing fatigue and stress
- In turn this will be helpful for maintaining and supporting enjoyable sexual activity

Plan Ahead:

- What time of day are you generally less stiff and sore?
- Time pain medication for an hour or so before sex
- Pace yourself during the day to save energy
- A warm bath or shower prior to sex may help your comfort levels
- Use a heating pad or electric blanket
- Massage for relaxing foreplay
- Pillows and rolled towels to support sore joints



Get Creative:

- You may need to try different positions
- Patience and understanding may also be needed!
- Keep your sense of humour and have fun!



Other common concerns:

What if I am not in a relationship?

- Having arthritis may mean you lose your self-confidence about having new relationships
- However, most relationships depend on a variety of shared connections and interests rather than just physical intimacy
- Keep up your social contacts and activities you enjoy
- Perhaps have a go at new activities that are manageable and enjoyable for you



Will my arthritis medications affect my sex life?

- Most drugs used to treat arthritis are not likely to affect your sex life
- However, steroids can sometimes reduce sexual desire or cause temporary impotence
- Discuss your medications with your Doctors if you have any concerns
- Ask your Doctor if any of your medications affect the contraceptive pill

Will my joint replacement affect my sex life?

Following a hip replacement- speak to your Doctor/surgeon about certain movements as there may be a risk of dislocating the new joint.

This may include:

- Not bending the legs up
- No kneeling for 6 weeks after surgery
- Keeping your hips straight

Following a knee replacement: NO kneeling for 6 weeks

CHECK WITH YOUR HEALTH TEAM for any specific post-surgery instructions



For more information:

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