

Live Well with Arthritis

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Arthritis is a chronic disease that disrupts millions of lives each year, and the Southeastern District Health Department's Arthritis Program wants to assist people in the process of taking greater control of their arthritis by providing the Arthritis Foundation Exercise Class and Self-Help Course.

The self-help course, which will begin on Tuesday, October 16th, teaches people with arthritis skills they need to build their own self-management program and allow them to become an active member of their health-care team, work better with their health-care providers and handle the day-to-day challenges of their disease. The class, which will be held at the Southeastern District Health Department, is a six-week group education course that will meet once a week for six weeks starting on Tuesday, October 16th at 4:30 p.m.-6:30 p.m. The fee for the class is \$30

The exercise class is a fun way for people with arthritis to strengthen and stretch their muscles and improve their range-of-motion. The free class is held on Mondays and Wednesdays of each week at 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. at the Southeastern District Health Department on 1901 Alvin Ricken Drive, Pocatello.

To further help people manage their arthritis pain; the Arthritis Foundation recommends people with arthritis to do the following:

- **Exercise:** Exercise can help people with arthritis feel less pain, move more easily, feel more energetic, and keep their muscles, bones, and joints healthy. The Center of Disease Control (CDC) recommends that people with arthritis exercise 30 minutes a day 3 times a week. **But remember to always consult with your physician before starting any exercise program.**
- **Manage Weight:** It is important for people with arthritis to manage their weight by exercising and eating right, since excess weight can cause an increase risk of osteoarthritis in joints, increases damage to joints, increases pain, and increases the risk for other chronic disease.
- **Eat Healthy:** Eating healthy is important for everyone, but especially for someone who has arthritis. Research has shown that certain foods can reduce arthritis pain and improve symptoms. For example, foods high in omega-3 fatty acids: salmon, herring, sardines, flaxseed, and walnuts.
- **Modify daily activities:** Just because a person has arthritis does not mean that they can't participate in every day activities. They just need to be done differently, and an occupational therapist can help people with arthritis learn to do things differently to prevent pain.

- **Practice relaxation techniques:** Deep breathing, guided imagery, and yoga are all helpful relaxation techniques to manage arthritis pain.
- **Keep a positive attitude:** While it may be hard to keep a positive attitude when you are dealing with constant pain, but research has shown that people who stay positive can reduce their symptoms of pain.
- **Apply heat or cold to source of pain:** Heat and cold can be used for temporary relief from pain. When there is heat and swelling in the joint try cold. Different things work for different people.
- **Get adequate amounts of sleep:** A good night's rest can help when you are dealing with pain. It has been shown that poor quality of sleep can increase arthritis pain.
- **Always consult with your doctor:** It is important to consult with your doctor often about the symptoms you are dealing with. And remember "you have arthritis" is not a diagnosis. There are over 120 types of arthritis and, each of which has a different treatment. To get the right treatment you must get the right diagnosis. To help your doctor with the proper diagnosis it is helpful to provide him/her with information about your symptoms.

Arthritis can disrupt a person's way of living, but the good news is there are ways to live well with arthritis. For additional information or to register for the Arthritis Foundation Self-Help Course or exercise class, contact Arthritis Program Coordinator, Tracy McCulloch at 239-5250 or the Arthritis Foundation at www.arthritis.org.