

Home-based exercise to manage aromatase inhibitor (AI) associated arthralgia in women diagnosed with early breast cancer¹

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Breast cancer (BC) is largely a disease of aging, with most new cases diagnosed in women who are postmenopausal. In the 70-80% of these women whose BC tumors are hormone receptor positive (HR+), national guidelines call for adjuvant endocrine treatment that includes an aromatase inhibitor (AI). Most women on an AI (74%) report joint pain, stiffness or achiness (arthralgia), and for many women these symptoms are moderate to severe. As AIs are prescribed for 5 years and potentially as many as 10 years, moderate-to-severe AI-arthralgia can be a factor in AI discontinuation and suboptimal adherence, and compromises quality of life in survivorship. This study investigated whether a home-based walking program (adapted from the Arthritis Foundations' Walk With Ease program) could provide a safe and effective approach to managing AI-Arthralgia. A

randomized controlled trial compared women who were asked to walk at least 150 minutes per week over a 6-week period (Intervention) with Wait List Control. Our final sample (N=62) had a mean age of 64 years and 74% are white. At six weeks, Intervention participants reported significantly increased walking minutes/week ($p<0.01$), reduced stiffness ($p<0.05$), fewer limitations in activities of daily living (ADL) ($p<0.01$), and increased confidence in managing their joint symptoms ($p<0.01$). At 6 months post-intervention, stiffness and ADL benefits had been maintained, although walking minutes/week had decreased. This study contributes to the growing evidence that exercise can be a safe and effective alternative or complement to medications for AI-arthralgia management.

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