

What is physical therapy, and how may it aid in the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis?

Gerd R Burmester*

Department of Rheumatology and Clinical Immunology, Charité-University Medicine Berlin, Berlin, Germany

Introduction

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is an autoimmune disease that affects the joints, causing inflammation and swelling. Self-management measures such as physical therapy can help reduce symptoms and improve quality of life, even if medications are required to delay the disease's course [1].

RA is a long-term illness for which there is no cure. The symptoms of RA differ from person to person, but the joints in the foot, ankles, knees, hands, wrists, elbows, and shoulders are the most typically affected.

We'll go over what physical therapy is and how it can help people with RA in this article. We also go over the advantages and disadvantages of physical therapy for RA, as well as some extra advice on how to manage the disease [2].

Physical therapy is a combination of prescribed exercise, hands-on care, and patient education, according to the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA). Its goal is to assist individuals by:

- Enhancing movement
- Regaining functionality
- Disability prevention
- Pain relief or management
- Enhancing the quality of life

Physical activity is crucial in the treatment of RA. According to the American College of Rheumatology, people with arthritis who exercise on a regular basis have the following health benefits.

- Greater levels of energy
- Pain levels are lower
- Improved sleep led to better daily performance.

Some people may want to work with a physical therapist to design a treatment plan that is specific to them. Others may like to experiment with a range of low-impact activities to determine what suits them best.

Examples of RA-related physical therapy activities and strategies

Various physical therapy exercises may aid in the relief of RA

symptoms. Here are a few examples:

Stretches: Due to joint pain and exhaustion, people with RA may be deterred from exercising. Stretching helps to loosen stiff joints without aggravating discomfort. Before stretching, people should gently warm up for 3–5 minutes. After that, they should hold each stretch for 30–60 seconds before releasing it [3].

Balancing: The disease strikes the majority of persons between the ages of 40 and 60. Fall injuries may be more common in older persons who acquire RA. Such injuries can be avoided with balancing exercises.

Walking is a low-impact form of exercise that can be done practically anywhere. People can begin slowly and gradually increase the pace, distance, and elevation to fit their personal capabilities. People should engage in at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity movement per week, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). According to the group, brisk walking counts toward this goal.

Risks and precautions

Physical therapy can aid in the management of RA symptoms. However, it's always a good idea to consult with a doctor before starting a new workout routine to be sure the exercises are safe. People can engage in nearly any type of exercise as long as it is low-impact. The weight-bearing joints, such as the hips, knees, and ankles, are subjected to the least amount of pressure and tension during these workouts. Low-impact exercises include the following: Water aerobics, walking, and swimming [4].

Rheumatoid arthritis is an autoimmune illness that affects the joints and causes pain, swelling, and inflammation. Treatments and therapies are available to aid in the management of the disease, the alleviation of symptoms, and the improvement of quality of life. Physical therapy is one self-management strategy that people may find useful. Before beginning a new fitness regimen, people should consult with a doctor or physical therapist to confirm that it is safe for them. As the body adjusts to a new regimen, RA symptoms may worsen at first. If this happens, and joint inflammation and pain linger, it's time to scale back on the intensity of the activity. It's also critical to take any recommended drugs as directed because they aid to reduce symptoms. To select the ideal workout programme for their body, an individual should consult with a doctor or physical therapist.

*Correspondence to: Gerd R Burmester, Department of Rheumatology and Clinical Immunology, Charité-University Medicine Berlin, Berlin, Germany, E-mail: burmester.gr@cum.de

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