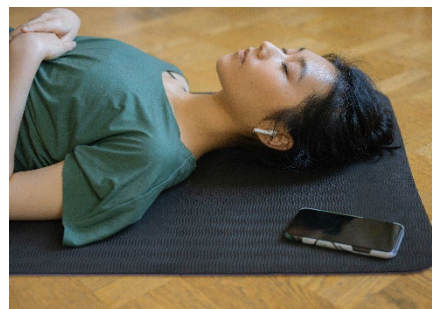


Meditation for Arthritis

Regular meditation practice may help ease arthritis symptoms, but the trick is sticking with it. To do that, it's important to find a type of meditation that best suits you. Not sure where to start? Give these popular meditation techniques a try.

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)

Several studies show that mindfulness meditation is one of the most effective forms of meditation for arthritis. This meditation technique is about being fully present in the moment and acknowledging thoughts, feelings, and sensations in an open, nonjudgmental way. For example, if you feel a painful sensation in your knee, instead of negatively labeling it, you simply acknowledge it, accept it, and let it go. This helps you break the pattern of negative thinking, which can make pain worse. While MBSR is a structured program, you can start a mindfulness meditation practice at home using YouTube videos.



Active Meditation

Meditation doesn't have to be done in a dimly lit room while seated in lotus position. You can meditate just about anywhere – the shower, standing in line at the supermarket, walking in the park or even while washing the dishes. Like mindfulness meditation, active meditation requires you to intently focus on the present moment, and gently acknowledge and let go of feelings, thoughts, and sensations as they arise.

You can make just about any activity a mindful, active meditation. For example, while walking, instead of listening to music or thinking about your to-do list, focus on your body's movements and what you feel, hear, and see. This could mean paying attention to how the breeze feels on your face, listening to the sounds of birds chirping or observing the colors of leaves. While washing dishes, take slow, deep breaths and feel the warmth of the dishwater as it covers your hands. Watch the bubbles fill the sink, smell the scent of the detergent, and pay attention to the sounds of dishes clanking together. Repeatedly practicing mindfulness in everyday activities will make it easier.

Yoga Breathing

This simple form is a great way to start and end your day. Sit comfortably, relax, and focus on the sensation of your breath as you inhale and exhale. Inhale for four seconds and then exhale for six seconds. Repeat for at least two minutes. If your mind wanders, gently bring your attention back to your breath.

Guided Imagery

Guided imagery harnesses the power of your thoughts to improve your health. Relax in a comfortable position and visualize a scene that touches on all your senses – from what you see, hear, taste, touch, and smell to even what you're thinking and feeling. Most people choose to imagine a peaceful place, like the beach or the lake. To start, it may be helpful to listen to a guided recording or try it with an instructor for the first few times. You can find many CDs, DVDs, online audio recordings and videos to help you begin.

Transcendental Meditation

In transcendental meditation, you sit comfortably with your eyes closed while silently repeating a mantra or a phrase. The goal is to practice twice a day, morning and night, for at least 15 to 20 minutes. This technique is supposed to help your mind to settle inward and quiet the mind until you reach a silent and peaceful awareness. People with arthritis who learn to use transcendental meditation are likely to have milder and easier-to-control flares. The best way to start is to take classes from a certified instructor. Visit www.tm.org to find a class near you.

Source: Arthritis Foundation (Arthritis@Work)