

Keeping Your Joints Healthy

(NAPSA)—Knowing a few facts about the wear and care of your joints can help you take steps to keep them healthy.

Healthy joints have cartilage, which acts as a spongy shock absorber on the ends of the bones so they don't rub against each other. When you don't have enough cartilage, you can have pain.

To Keep Your Joints Healthy

- **Exercise.** Walking, jogging or swimming helps keep muscles strong, and takes the strain off the joints.

- **A healthy diet and a healthy weight.** Carrying extra weight stresses your joints. Eat less fat and sugar, and more fruits and vegetables.

- **A healthy lifestyle.** Get enough sleep and eat a balanced diet.

What To Know About Joint Pain

Joint pain often indicates arthritis. Common types are osteoarthritis, gout and rheumatoid arthritis. Other diseases or injuries can also lead to joint pain. As you age, joint pain becomes more common as well.

Fortunately, you can do a lot to feel better and stay active, even if you have these problems.

How To Feel Better

- **Exercise,** moving all your joints. Walking helps circulation, supports the joints and strengthens the muscles.

- If you have a sore joint, you can use an ice pack or a bag of frozen vegetables on the sore spot.

- Do your best to maintain a weight that is right for you, since too much weight can make your knees and hips ache.

- **Speak up.** Tell the doctor if your pain is improving or getting worse. Medicines can reduce pain and stiffness, and a doctor will



Exercise helps keep muscles strong to take the strain off the joints.

know if joint replacement is an option you should consider.

Joint Replacement Surgery

Joint replacement surgery involves removing a damaged joint and putting in a new one. It's usually done by an orthopaedic surgeon. Sometimes, the surgeon will not remove the whole joint, but will only replace or fix the damaged parts.

The new joint, called a prosthesis, can be made of plastic, metal or ceramic. It may or may not be cemented into place, and your bone will grow into it. New joints generally last at least 10 to 15 years.

Learn More

The National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases, National Institutes of Health, has free, easy-to-read information in English and Spanish about joint health. Download or order publications on other topics at www.niams.nih.gov/multi-cultural or call toll free (877) 226-4267.