



Care Partner Information

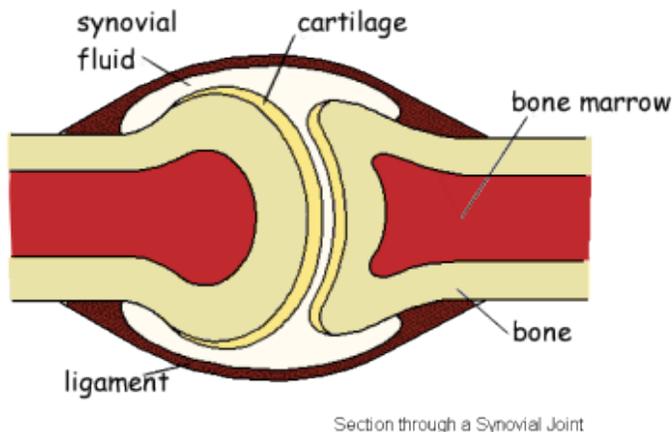
Tips for Providing Older Adult Care

Range of Motion in Older Adults

Range of motion is how well someone can move the joints in their body. Most people lose some range of motion as they get older. Some reasons for this are tight muscles, injury, pain, arthritis, or lack of activity.

Often older adults do not know how much range of motion they've lost until it is hard to do things like walk, shower, get dressed, or cook.

Less range of motion makes it more likely a person will fall and get hurt. The best way to protect range of motion is to keep moving, even when it is hard.



Section through a Synovial Joint

What joints do

Joints, such as hips, knees, and elbows, are very important for range of motion. Joints connect and cushion bones with tissue and fluid. As people age, their joints can lose fluid and tissue. This can cause pain and stiffness.

Motion is like lotion for joints. Movement helps to “grease” the joints, which makes it easier and less painful to move. This is why joints may feel stiff after a long car ride, and move better after a long walk.

This Care Partner Information page is part of a series on older adult caregiving tips. They are written to help family and community caregivers, direct care workers and community health representatives care for older adults. Available in English and Spanish at www.aging.arizona.edu

Protect the ability to move

The best way to keep range of motion is to be active every day. It is important to try new activities so the body is challenged. Everyone — young and old — should do activities that improve strength, flexibility, and balance. Lifting weights or doing yoga can help build strength. Yoga or Tai chi (pronounced tie chee) can help with balance.



Many people do not stretch enough when they exercise. To prevent injury, stretching should be done after exercising when the muscles and joints are warm. Slowly move into a stretch and hold the position for about a minute. Stay still and try not to bounce when in a stretch because it can cause an injury. Stretches may be hard, but should never be painful.

Walking is a great exercise for older adults. Try walking at a shopping mall. Malls are safe places to walk, even when the weather is too hot or too cold. For those who can't walk, some exercises for range of motion can be done while lying in bed or sitting in a chair or wheelchair.



Improve range of motion

If an older adult has lost some range of motion, it's a good idea to talk to a doctor before starting new exercises. The doctor will be able to check for problems in the muscles, joints, or brain that may limit motion. The doctor may refer the person to physical therapy. They also may know about local programs to help older adults improve movement and fitness.

Check with local recreation centers to learn more about fitness classes for older adults.

Resources

Physical activity guidelines for older adults: www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/basics/older_adults

Silver Sneakers: www.silversneakers.com

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