



# MAINTAINING OUR JOINTS



**GUEST CORNER**

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Our joints play a critical role in our range of motion (“ROM”), namely, how far we can move and stretch our joints and muscles in different directions. Regular directed exercise will help “maintain” our joints for extended and pain-free ROM.

**THE STRUCTURE OF OUR JOINTS**

A joint is where two bones come together in our bodies. Ligaments keep the joints together and provide joint stability. Muscles connect around the joints with tendons to allow for movement of the joint.

The joint that allows the most movement is the synovial joint, which has two bones that meet in a joint capsule and are covered with cartilage to help with smooth, friction free movement. Synovial fluid surrounds the joint in the capsule to provide nutrients to the joint. We have six types of different synovial joints, of which the hinge and ball-and-socket joint are the more important for our ROM.

- Hinge joints open and close in opposite directions, for example in our knees and elbows.
- Ball-and-socket joints or multi-directional joints are those where the ball-shaped surface of one rounded bone fits into the cup-like depression of another bone, for example in our shoulders and hips.

**RANGE OF MOTION**

ROM is subdivided into the following categories: 1) active range of motion (“AROM”) that we actively do ourselves, 2) active assisted range of motion (“AAROM”), and 3) passive range of motion (“PROM”). AAROM and PROM are performed with the help of someone else like a physical therapist to improve the ROM, when a joint cannot move freely anymore.

**HOW WE USE OUR JOINTS IN DAILY ACTIVITIES**

To perform our day-to-day activities with freedom of movement and no joint restrictions, it is important to keep our tendons, muscles, and ligaments strong and healthy.

We use ROM several times per day, from the moment we wake up until we retire to bed. For example, getting dressed we flex/bend our hip and knee to put our pants on. We need to rotate and move our hips, knees, and ankles to put our socks and shoes on. Negotiating stairs or going for a walk, requires adequate ROM in our hips, knees and ankles

combined with muscle strength, balance, and stability.

As we age, we may lose some ROM but, if any of our joints becomes so stiff or painful and loose mobility, it makes it more difficult to move with ease and we start compensating with other body parts which, in turn, throws the natural alignment and balance of our body off.

**MOVEMENT EXERCISES TO KEEP OUR JOINTS MOVING WITH EASE**

The following simple exercises will reduce joint stiffness, improve muscle flexibility and strength increase circulation to reduce pain, improve balance and mobility of our bodies and can prevent possible injuries:

1. Waking up in the morning:
  - Stretch your body out with arms overhead, fingers and hands stretched out, legs straight out and feet flexed back. Take 3 deep breaths in and out.
  - Flex your one hip and knee up to your chest and use your hands to gently pull your knee to your chest without pain – hold for 3 breaths and repeat with other leg.
  - Gently raise your hips and pelvis up in a bridge. Repeat 3 times.
2. Sit up on the side of the bed:
  - Roll onto your side and sit up on the side of the bed.
  - Feet planted on ground, move your neck gently forward and backwards, slowly turn your head/neck from side to side. Repeat 3 times.
  - Rotate and stretch your trunk (thoracic spine) with your shoulders and arms from side to side and turn from left to right. Repeat 3 times.
  - Bend your body forward resting your elbows on your thighs – and if possible lean down to touch your hand between your feet on the floor to stretch out your back. Hold 10 seconds.
  - Sit up straight again and bend and lift one leg to rest your ankle on your other thigh to stretch your buttock muscle and hip joint. Hold 10 seconds and repeat on other side.
3. Come up to standing and walk to the bathroom, when done with your bathroom necessities:
  - Hold onto the countertop. Raise high up on to the ball of your feet by lifting you heels up, squeezing buttock muscles tight. Repeat 5 times.
  - March on the spot lifting one knee high up to your chest, while balancing on your other leg. Repeat 5 times.
  - Step sideways out into a lunge by bending one knee, keeping back flat, and leaning forward onto the countertop. Repeat 5 times to each side.
4. Adopt small daily routines to keep your joints mobile and your body healthy. Take daily brisk



walks, do low impact exercises, keep moving to stay pain-free and injury free and always listen to your body. Do NOT follow the NO PAIN NO GAIN advice!

If you experience any injury or joint stiffness, please contact your medical doctor or physical therapist. A

physical therapist can treat you with AAROM and PROM and measure your progress of your joint mobility to get you to a AROM state.

*If you have any difficulty moving with ease or experience pain, please contact your physician or physical therapist for help.*

*Lize Lubbe is the owner of Lize Lubbe Physical Therapy with its main practice located at 892 Route 35 in Cross River and a PT Studio in the premises of Apex Fitness (where her team focus on the rehabilitation of sports-related injuries). Learn more by calling 914-875-9430, emailing contact@lizeclubbept.com or visiting www.lizeclubbept.com.*



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