Lupus and Exercise: Finding Workouts That Work for You

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Low-Impact Workouts to Make Lupus and Exercise a Breeze

Exercising can seem particularly difficult, or even near impossible, when you are struggling with lupus. While exercising during a lupus flare is not recommended as you need time for your body to rest and heal, exercising when you are not in a flare is actually a great way to prevent future instances.

It is also a good way to prevent health risks that may or may not be associated with lupus, such as heart disease, stroke and obesity. While it may not be feasible to get in as much exercise as recommended by most health organizations every week, you can get in some as much as possible.

Find Something You Like to Do

If you're not big into exercise in the first place, starting a routine is going to seem daunting and not that fun. Instead, try to find classes or an exercise you actually like.

This could include dance classes, taking your family out to play tennis, brisk walks with the dog, or bike rides. These are all fabulous ways to stay healthy and keep your cardiovascular system going.

Joint-Friendly Workouts

If you are someone who struggles tremendously with joint pain, it is a good idea to find workouts you can do that won't trigger or exacerbate the pain. This can involve things like swimming, yoga, bike riding, or going on the elliptical machine.

Exercises that involve lots of jumping or banging of your knees, like running, can actually have a detrimental effect on you. However, if you work up to it by building up the muscles around your joints to better support them with joint-friendly exercises, this can be much more effective and less painful.

Weight-Bearing Exercises

While doing workouts that are easy on the joints is a great way to get in your cardio, it is important you do at least some weight-bearing exercises. This can include bike riding or going on the elliptical machine, but can also include walking or jogging.

Weight-bearing exercises are incredibly important for keeping your body not only in good health, but for preventing osteoporosis. Doing exercises where there is no weight bearing can be detrimental and can aid in developing the disorder.

This is especially important to be mindful of if you are on steroids, as they can also contribute to osteoporosis.

Be Gentle With Yourself

If you're just recovering from a flare or have been inactive for a long time, you can't expect yourself to become superwoman or superman right away. You can make goals for yourself to increase your exercise capacity over time, but if you've been sedentary for a while, don't expect to be able to run two miles straight on the treadmill.

Start with small workouts and increase as your body feels up to it. You will know, as the workout will start to feel a little too easy over time.

Listen to Your Body

If you are having a flare or your joints are hurting as you're working out, stop what you are doing. Do not try and push your body to a place it cannot go just because you want to stay in shape.

Instead, rest and see if the pain passes. If it doesn't, it is time to call it a day and instead do lighter exercise like swimming, or go home and rest.

Ice Your Joints

After you work out, you may experience some joint pain or discomfort. If this becomes serious, call your doctor. However, if it is a simple annoyance, use some ice to help calm your joints down.

Do Yoga

Yoga is a fantastic way to start getting in shape, especially if you have been sedentary for a while during a flare. While part of yoga may have a cardiovascular component, much of it is relaxing and stretching.

This is also a great way to help build the muscles around your joints and strengthen your muscles and ligaments generally. It is also great for stretching out muscles that have been inactive due to flares or being sedentary for a long period of time.

Go Swimming

While weight-bearing exercise is necessary, swimming can be a good way to get in a workout, even if you're hurting. Warm water is good for your muscles and the water gives you a bit of a cushion and supports your body.

If you're looking for something a bit more intense, many gyms also offer water aerobic workouts so you can burn more calories and often develop muscles in your arms while being supported by the water.

Painkillers

If mild pain is an issue every day, take a painkiller a couple of hours before you work out. This will help reduce inflammation so you can participate in the activities you have planned.

Exercising Without a Gym

For some people, the gym is simply not feasible due to cost or distance. Luckily, there are many ways you can work out at home at little or no cost.

Purchase a bike and ride it around the neighborhood, increasing your pace and distance as you go. Go for walks two or three times a day to get your blood flowing and muscles moving.

Or, if you're feeling particularly adventurous, you can download workouts online. Many instructors offer free material on YouTube or Podcasts, for anything ranging from mild workouts to yoga to extremely intense workouts.

This will allow you to work out in the privacy of your own home and for you to go at your own pace without feeling embarrassed. This is a great alternative if you've been sedentary for a while as well, and are working up your strength and endurance to begin taking classes at your local gym.