



## Physical Activity

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Guest Speaker: Dr. Kim Huffman

You should **exercise**. Sound familiar? I know. I hear you loud and clear. You woke up this morning in pain. Trying to muster enough energy to even get out of bed felt impossible. And getting ready for your day felt like you just ran a 5K. I get it. I have arthritis, too, and I know what you're thinking. "Wait, didn't I just wake up? I should have more energy than this! What did I do in my sleep to feel *this* exhausted? Oh, that's right. I didn't sleep well. My 'pain-somnia' kept me from getting any good sleep. So now you're telling me to go exercise?

Ugh. *That's* supposed to help my arthritis pain?" The short answer: YES! The truth is, an ever-growing body of research shows exercise is one of the best ways to treat our arthritis. But for those of us living with it 24/7, it can be one of the last things we want or even feel able to do. Been there, done that, going through it all over again. As a patient, I know how hard it is to get moving when I have pain. As an occupational therapist, I know how hard it is to get someone motivated to get moving, and I understand how staying physically active can make a huge difference to our health.

I've had years I was more active than others – hiking, completing a 10K, biking and even climbing a 14,000-foot mountain. And I've had years, like this past one, where my physical activity level has decreased – all due to a difficult recovery from surgery, changing biologics to get my RA back under control and switching to a more sedentary job. I am feeling the difference. I need to get my body moving more. But how?

I'm so excited about our Live Yes! With Arthritis Podcast episode on arthritis and physical activity. My co-host, Julie (who also has arthritis), and I get to chat with Dr. Kim Huffman, a rheumatologist and researcher from Duke University Medical Center, who is an expert on arthritis and physical activity. I really enjoyed our conversation because Dr. Huffman is validating what I am trying to convey to my fellow colleagues in the OT/PT world – reframe "exercise" as "physical activity" and make sure it's something motivating to the patient. These are two key components to getting active and staying active.

It's not just all about getting on the treadmill or lifting weights. It's about moving your body and staying active. Find something that makes you happy – like a morning routine dance party, taking your dog for a walk, **biking** with your kids, or for me, just walking outdoors on a trail or hiking. Build little bursts of physical activity into your daily routine and know that even daily tasks that get you moving – like walking to the mailbox, grocery shopping and vacuuming – count as physical activity.

Being physically active can help reduce some of your arthritis pain and symptoms. You'll also get some inspiration from Julie's story on going from not owning a bike to completing an epic bike ride down the California coast. If you're afraid of getting started or not sure what you should do, **listen to this episode on arthritis and physical activity** for some ideas and tips from our expert, and get a better understanding of why physical activity is crucial to our treatment plans.

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