

Orthopaedic Connection

More About Arthritis and Exercise Machines

By Thomas J. Haverbush, M.D.
Orthopaedic Surgeon

Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

As class ended last week I said I had nothing against stair climbers if you don't have arthritis of the knees or hips. I know they are popular, but they produce high compression and shear forces on your joints. They can do more harm than good.

An attendant at a fitness place or a salesperson does not know this. I do know this and am trying to help you and keep you out of trouble!

Leg Press Machine

If you have arthritis and go to a fitness place ask to see the leg press machine that can exercise one leg at a time and adjust the weight accordingly.

Key Point. The leg press or seated knee extension machine has to allow you to do it one leg at a time. Leg extension machines (leg press) that make you exercise both legs together put excess stress on the kneecap and can make your arthritis worse.

Leg Curl Machine

A seated leg curl machine can help strengthen your hamstrings (back of the thigh). Ideally in this machine you should be able to pull each leg back individually. This machine can be very helpful to balance strength between front and back of your thighs.

Dr. H., What about a Nu-Step machine?

If you can find a place that has one, you are blessed. They are great and very effective and safe. They are too expensive to have at home. If you find a place that has one you know you are in the right place. Any place having one will have a staff that is more knowledgeable about what your needs are.

Upper Body Fitness

In arthritis or any fitness program upper body strength has its own importance.

Please don't use an arm machine or any type of overhead machine like a shoulder press. Too hard on your rotator cuff(s) and often your neck.

Better idea. Use lightweight dumbbells. They are much more versatile. They are safer and you can use them at the fitness place and at home. It is economical to invest in a set of dumbbells.

Back and Abdominals (Abds)

Steer clear of "core" machines purported to strengthen the abdominal muscles and the back. They don't work.

Floor exercises do work that are helpful and you can be instructed in these exercises by any physical therapist.

Still More

I feel that what I'm helping you know over the last two weeks is as important as anything we have covered. I hope you realize how valuable this information can be to the management of your arthritis.

Please join us again next week for suggestions about balance exercises, getting started and some additional advice about equipment.

For those who want to know more about arthritis in general check out our office teaching website www.orthopodsurgeon.com that can take you to Your Orthopaedic Connection for much additional information.

Our goal is simple - To help people return to more pain free, functional lives.

Good health. Good life. All the best to you.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush