

Decreasing Cartilage Loss in Osteoarthritis



Although some over-the-counter nutritional supplements have been advertised as capable of rebuilding cartilage in arthritic joints, the claims most often do not stand up under scientific scrutiny. To protect damaged cartilage, the most important things you can do are **strengthen the muscles that support the joints in your body affected by osteoarthritis** and **make them more flexible** as well. In this way, any decrease in

cartilage is countered, at least in part, by the improved condition of the joint and nearby structures.

To maintain flexibility, you should include daily range-of-motion exercises in your routine. You should also strive to be active at least 30 minutes a day most days of the week. A couple of those days should be devoted to strength training exercises modified, if necessary, to accommodate any limitations your arthritis presents.

A recent study published in the journal *Arthritis & Rheumatism* concluded that there might be a correlation between quadriceps strength and cartilage maintenance in one part of the knee (the lateral compartment of the patellofemoral joint). The results suggested that keeping your thigh muscles strong could help prevent at least some cartilage deterioration that would otherwise be expected with osteoarthritis.

We do know this for sure: **The worst thing you can do is avoid all exercise, even if one or more of your joints is severely arthritic.** Being physically active can help control pain and swelling in the joint, strengthen muscles and keep the joint cartilage at the ends of the bones maximally nourished. Psychologically, exercise can decrease anxiety in the short term and promote well-being in the long term. Finally, it often helps you sleep better at night—a benefit that many people with arthritis would welcome.

If you suffer from osteoarthritis, schedule a visit with us. We can discuss and design an exercise program that will help increase muscle strength, keep the joints stable and enable you to move with less pain and stiffness.