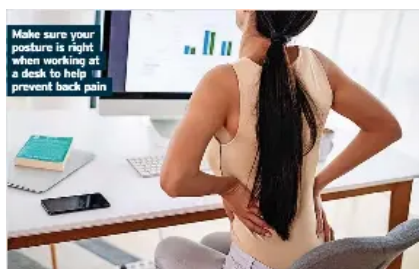


## - Muscles

## Seven simple ways to help protect your joint health

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Your joints are vital to staying active and living well, but they often don't get the attention they deserve until discomfort arises.



Whether you're a fitness enthusiast, someone managing a busy lifestyle, or simply ageing gracefully, taking proactive steps to protect your joints is essential for long-term health.

We've consulted with experts who explained why protecting joint health is crucial, and have also provided some simple tips and strategies to help keep your joints healthy and functional.

So, here are seven easy ways to protect your joint health...

### 1. Try strength training

Don't be afraid of strength training – it's incredibly beneficial for our bones. "Joints respond well to movement and certain structures within them like cartilage will be healthier if they are compressed regularly," says Lucy Macdonald, physio at Restart Physio. "Strength training is excellent for joint health, especially if you build the resistance in small increments."

### 2. Eat a healthy diet

"The different structures within and surrounding our joints are constantly regenerating, and therefore eating a healthy diet to fuel the creation of new and healthy cells is essential for joint health," says Lucy. "Making sure that you are eating a varied diet, including plenty of vegetables and healthy fats found in nuts, seeds and oily fish will help to ensure you are taking on the vitamins essential for joint health, like vitamin D."

### 3. Protect your posture

"Research suggests that up to 60% of the adult population can expect to have back pain at some point in their lives and working constantly in front of a computer, perhaps from home, is inevitably a contributory factor," says Dr Rod

Hughes, consultant rheumatologist working in partnership with GOPO Joint Health.

"Ideally, you should sit with your knees, hips and elbows at 90-degree angles, with your screen at eye level, as well as taking regular exercise and stretching before and after work."

### 4. Get moving

Dr Hughes recommends low-impact exercises such as walking, yoga and pilates. "Exercise helps to strengthen joints and surrounding tissues, avoiding pain and stiffness, in addition to encouraging weight loss," he explains. "Maintaining a healthy weight is important to reduce load bearing on the joints."

### 5. Stretch to avoid injuries

"Osteoarthritis is the most common form of arthritis in the UK, with joint pain a leading symptom," says Dr Hughes. "Osteoarthritis can sometimes result from an untreated acute joint injury, so it is important to always stretch and warm up before exercise and allow injuries to heal properly."

### 6. Break up repetitive tasks

"Avoid overloading your joints with prolonged, repetitive movements. Instead, alternate between different tasks and take regular breaks," recommends Katie Knapton, physiotherapist at ACPOHE. "This approach not only protects your joints but also improves overall performance and reduces the risk of repetitive strain injuries."

### 7. Listen to your body

"While some discomfort during new activities is normal, sharp or lasting pain requires attention," says Katie. "Modify activities as needed and seek professional advice when necessary."