- Musculoskeletal system

How to protect your joints in your 20s

On World Arthritis Day today, experts share how small changes, from taking breaks during long sitting hours to preventing workout injuries, can help keep your joints healthy in your

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L20s ong hours at a desk, poor form and overtraining can take a toll on joint health in your 20s. Experts caution that arthritis cannot be strictly prevented, given the role of genetics, autoimmune factors and past injuries. However, building healthy habits early can help delay its onset, reduce premature wear and tear, and safeguard long-term mobility.



MOVE OFTEN

Sitting for long periods can cause stiffness and weaken the muscles supporting joints. Take movement breaks every 30 to 60 minutes, walk regularly and avoid staying in one position for hours.

WARM UP AND COOL DOWN Prepare muscles and joints before strenuous exercise. Increase workout intensity gradually, use proper form and allow adequate recovery to reduce injury risk. Avoid training through pain.

MAINTAIN A HEALTHY WEIGHT Excess weight increases stress on weightbearing joints, particularly the knees and hips, raising the risk of osteoarthritis. A healthy weight can reduce joint loading.

WEAR APPROPRIATE SHOES Choose footwear suited to your activity, with shock-absorbing midsoles, stable heels, a wide toe box and arch support where needed. Supportive shoes help absorb impact and distribute weight evenly.

MAKE HEALTHY LIFESTYLE CHANGES

Avoid smoking, which studies associate with a higher risk of rheumatoid arthritis. Some studies suggest smokers are up to twice as likely to develop the condition as non-smokers. Limit alcohol and maintain a healthy sleep routine to support recovery.

DON'T IGNORE RECURRING PAIN Recurrent joint pain, swelling or prolonged morning stiffness warrants medical assessment. Don't dismiss persistent symptoms as workout soreness. Early diagnosis and treatment can help prevent further damage.

(Inputs from Dr Dheeraj Batheja, senior consultant, ortho spine surgery, Artemis Hospital, Gurugram; Dr Randhir Kenjale, consultant spine surgeon and orthopaedic specialist, Ruby Hall Clinic, Pune; Dr Aashish Chaudhry, director and head, Orthopaedics and Joint Replacement, Aakash Healthcare; and Dr Sushil Sharma, senior consultant, joint and knee replacement surgeon, Kailash Hospital, Noida.)*