

TRAINING TO PREVENT ARTHRITIS

By Dr. Joseph Caraccilo

Arthritis, the foremost crippling disease in the United States, affects more than 20 million people. Although it is commonly thought of as a disease of the aged, it also results from joint overuse and athletic injury in people of every age.

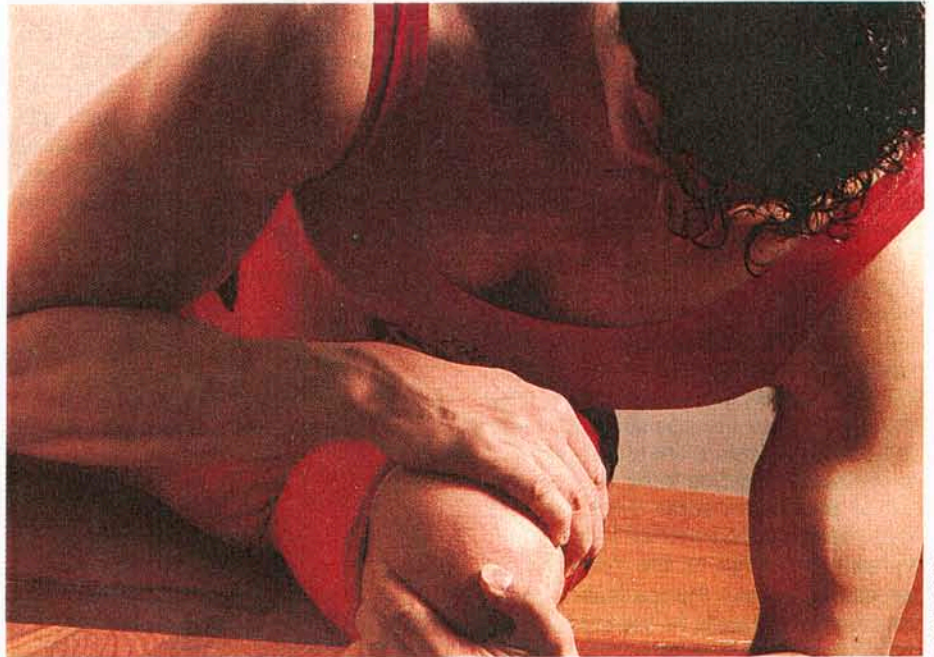
Inevitably, most men will experience some form of arthritis by the age of fifty. Secondary Osteoarthritis, brought about by known causes, such as athletic trauma, can be brought about by improper joint use or excessive weight bearing on a joint through obesity or overuse injuries.

HOW JOINTS WORK

A joint is the meeting of two bone ends, each covered with cartilage, which absorbs pressure and aids in pain-free motion. Since cartilage has no direct nerve or blood supply, it is highly susceptible to the degenerative effects of arthritis. The whole joint is enclosed in synovium, a bag-like structure which houses synovial fluid. This fluid has a high blood supply and provides the nutrients needed to maintain the cartilage. Proper joint movement is essential for the exchange of nutrients. Without free range-of-movement, and nutrient exchange, cartilage atrophies and painful arthritis occurs.

PROPER TRAINING

The proper program of movement exercises is an effective treatment and prevention for Secondary Osteoarthritis. Movement animates your joints and prevents further atrophy. Many are following the trend to get back in shape, but are putting undue stress on their joints, and could be actually doing more harm than good to their bodies. The application of



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proper technique is essential in the prevention of athletic injuries and joint stress.

Weight training has become a dominant part of a physical fitness program for strength or as a means of conditioning for other activities. Proper guidelines for safety and technique are necessary for a successful program and the avoidance of injury. The following basic guidelines will help you achieve a program which helps your body to grow and be in condition.

Always Warm-Up: Ten minutes of cycling or a light run will help to bring blood to your muscles, decreasing the risk of injury.

Stretch: Stretching is most effective when your muscles are already warmed up, not as your warm-up.

Technique: Proper technique should be applied for each specific exercise. For example, Squats, beyond 90 degrees of flexion induce knee injury, and should be avoided. Bicep curls while standing put undue stress on the lower back, leading to lumbar strain.

Equipment: Lifting belts should be used during heavy lifting to stabilize the spine

but not as a method to lift more weight.

Breathing: Proper breathing technique during weight training is essential to avoid injury. Exhale during the lifting stage.

Diet: Your diet need not include high doses of numerous supplements. A basic low-fat diet including fresh fruits and vegetables will enhance your energy and aid in recovery.

Cool Down: After your work-out, ten minutes of relaxed exercise, such as a brisk walk prevent cramping and tightening of muscles.

Traditional treatment for athletic related arthritis is the prescription of pain killers, and anti-inflammatory drugs. But by not changing your exercise techniques and habits, it will only become a chronic, and possibly more serious problem. Take the time to train correctly. It may seem like a pain...but it could be preventing one.

Dr. Joseph Caraccilo is a chiropractor with a private practice in New York specializing in Sports Injury and Rehabilitation.