

Arthritis Foundation® Leader Links

A New Year Off to A Moving Start!

2009 is well under way, and as an Arthritis Foundation Exercise, Tai Chi, or Aquatic Program Leader are making a difference in the lives of thousands of people who have committed to “move more” in 2009.

If you haven't already signed yourself up to join our national movement, “Let's Move Together” to make strides towards a healthier nation, visit www.letsmove.together.org today to sign up!

Research Update: 2008 Top Ten Advances

Share the good news about arthritis research from the past year. Download the full edition of *Research Update* or just read them one advance at each class. Either way, the news is sure to encourage everyone! The January/February issue of *Research Update* covers the **Top 10 Arthritis Events of 2008**:

1. [House Passes Landmark Arthritis Legislation](#)
2. [Early Aggressive Therapy Best for RA](#)
3. [Kinase Inhibitors Promising Treatment for RA](#)
4. [Arthritis Hampers Activity in Adults With Diabetes](#)
5. [Biologic Therapies Benefit Children With JA](#)
6. [Cardiovascular Risk High in Arthritis](#)
7. [State Arthritis Programs Enhanced](#)
8. [Immune System Ages Early in Arthritis](#)
9. [Gingivitis and RA Linked](#)
10. [Nearly Half of Americans Will Develop OA](#)

Download the [PDF](#) of this issue.

Why Lift Weights?

How strength training can help if you have RA

Lift weights with sore joints? Yeah, right. You might think that lifting weights is harmful for people with arthritis. But think again. Building strength has built steam as a great way to help people with RA function better and end soreness, stiffness and pain.

A study from Great Britain shows that a strength-training program called

progressive resistance training (PRT) may improve physical function in people with mildly disabling, well-controlled RA. PRT involves periodically increasing the amount of weight used during an exercise so benefits continue as muscle strength improves. People in the high-intensity – not high-impact – program dispelled the long-held notion that joints affected by RA needed more rest and protection than movement. None of the participants experienced a flare, and all improved endurance, gained lean body mass and lost fat from their abdomen, back and chest. Improvements also were seen in people with cachexia (see “What Is Cachexia?” below) – so much so that a larger trial is nearing completion to determine the effectiveness of PRT as a treatment for cachexia along with medications that control RA.

In the 12-week study, participants performed three sets of eight biceps curl, triceps pushdown, chest press, seated row, leg press, leg extension, leg curl and standing calf raise three times a week.

“The novelty of the study was not in the kind of exercises used – because over the course of a long-term training program, the exercises performed must be changed regularly, anyway – but rather in seeing the frequency and intensity at which people with RA could work,” says Samuele Marcora, PhD, exercise physiologist at the University of Wales in Bangor, United Kingdom.

To initially increase muscle strength, Marcora recommends using weight machines and then progressing to dumbbells. After several months working under the supervision of a qualified instructor to increase strength, Marcora says resistance bands could then be used at home for “maintenance” training.

– Donna Rae Siegfried

What is Cachexia?

Cachexia is a condition of muscle wasting that occurs in more than half of people with RA. Only the most severely affected people appear to be losing muscle mass, however. In many people with RA and cachexia, muscle mass decreases and fat mass increases. The result is an upsurge in fatigue, disability, infection and premature death.

Theories to explain the breakdown of muscle tissue include inflammatory cytokines blocking the growth of muscle cells and too little exercise performed by people with RA due to pain.

Quarterly Report Forms Were Due January 15th!

Please remember that the Quarterly Reports were due on **January 15th**. If you have not already done so, please submit them as soon as you can! Download your [Quarterly Report Form](#) now and fax or mail it on in!