

FAQs

1. What is the Walk With Ease Program?

The Arthritis Foundation Walk With Ease Program is a community-based physical activity and self-management education program. It can be done by individuals using the Walk With Ease guidebook on their own, or by groups led by trained leaders. Both the individual and group formats are set up as a structured six-week program. While walking is the central activity, Walk With Ease is a multi-component program that also includes health education, stretching and strengthening exercises, and motivational strategies. Group sessions include socialization time, pre-walk informational lecturettes, warm up and cool downs and a 10-35 minute walking period.

2. What are the program goals and objectives?

The overall goals of the Walk With Ease Program are threefold:

- To promote education about successful physical activity for people with arthritis
- To promote education about arthritis self-management and walking safely and comfortably
- To encourage participants to continue their walking program and explore other exercise and self-management programs that deliver proven benefits for people with arthritis.

By the end of the six-week program period, participants will:

- Understand the basics about arthritis and the relationship between arthritis, exercise, and pain
- Learn how to exercise safely and comfortably
- Use methods to make walking fun
- Make a doable personal walking plan with realistic goals for improved fitness
- Gather tips, strategies and resources to help them overcome barriers and continue to be physically active
- Learn about other programs and resources that can help maintain walking and other physical activity.

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3. What is the target population?

Walk With Ease was specifically developed for adults with arthritis who want to be more physically active. The program is also appropriate for people without arthritis, particularly those with diabetes, heart disease and other chronic conditions, who want to get more active. The only pre-requisite is the ability to be on your feet for at least 10 minutes without increased pain.

4. What are the essential program components and activities?

The essential program components are:

- **Walking** (10-35 minutes walking duration)
- **Health education information**
 - All participants receive the Walk With Ease guidebook which is organized in a logical sequence to provide the information needed to help participants get ready to walk, begin walking, and stay motivated to continue walking. Both the guidebook and the corresponding lecturettes conducted during the group sessions provide basic information on arthritis, managing pain and stiffness, tips on proper clothing and equipment, self-monitoring for physical problems, what to do when exercise hurts, and how to anticipate and overcome barriers to being physically active.
- **Stretching and Strengthening Exercises**
 - Both the individual and the group participants are encouraged to do stretching exercises when they walk and strengthening exercises twice a week. The Walk With Ease guidebook includes directions for the stretching and strengthening exercises. Individuals can also access video demonstrations of these exercises on the Arthritis Foundation's Walk With Ease website (www.arthritis.org/wwe).
 - During the group classes:
 - Stretching exercises are incorporated into the warm up and cool down periods.

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- Strengthening exercises are demonstrated once during the group class and participants are encouraged to do these at home.
- **Motivational Tips and Tools**
 - The Walk With Ease guidebook includes self-tests, a six week contract and walking diary forms to help participants identify their needs and interests, to set goals and rewards, and to track progress. Each guidebook chapter also contains motivational tips.
 - The group classes review these tools and encourage their use throughout the program.
 - An online support component is also available to individual and group participants. The Arthritis Foundation's Walk With Ease website (www.arthritis.org/wwe) provides several resources:
 - Tools (including the mobile app download) from the Walk With Ease guidebook are located online. Participants can complete their contract, take the starting point and ending point self-tests online and easily compare scores from one test to another. Participants can also log, update and refer back to their goals via the online contract.
 - Video instruction for the stretching and strengthening exercises

5. What is the length/ timeframe of the program?

- Both the individual and the group format are structured as six-week walking programs.
- Individuals using the workbook on their own are encouraged to work up to walking at least three times a week and to utilize all of the resources in the workbook over a six-week period.
- The group format classes meet three times a week for six weeks (a total of 18 sessions).
- Depending on the physical capabilities of the group and the amount of time they spend socializing before and after classes, the average class session length may last as little as 45 minutes in the beginning weeks of the program but may increase to an hour or more as the group improves their fitness level. The

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standardized scripts for the class sessions suggest that the walking time progresses an additional 5 minutes each week, as the group capability allows.

6. What is the recommended class size?

The recommended class size is 12-15 participants per leader. Groups may have more than one leader.

7. What evaluation data is available?

Walk With Ease was recently updated and evaluated by the Thurston Arthritis Research Center and Institute on Aging at the University of North Carolina. A rigorous scientific trial with 462 individuals from 31 rural and urban communities found that both the self-directed and group formats were safe and effective. Program participants experienced decreased disability; improvements in levels of pain, fatigue, stiffness and self-confidence; and better perceived control over arthritis, balance, strength and walking pace.

8. What are the leader requirements?

When recruiting individuals to undergo the Walk With Ease leader training, look for applicants with the following characteristics:

- Current certification in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) is required; first aid certification is strongly recommended. Although not required as a pre-requisite, first aid certification is strongly recommended because of the danger of falls or other injuries, especially when the program is conducted outdoors.
- Professional liability insurance coverage with an aggregate/single occurrence limit not less than one million dollars (\$1,000,000.00) for personal injury or property damage, unless covered by host facility's comprehensive or professional liability insurance policy.
- Other desirable abilities include:
 - Empathy toward people with arthritis and related diseases, gained through personal or professional experience.
 - Interest in working with groups of people with arthritis and related diseases.

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- Experience in teaching physical activity classes and skill in group process and instructional techniques.
- Desire and ability to help others.
- Strong belief in the value of regular physical activity.

9. How do leaders get trained?

- The newly updated Walk With Ease Leader Training is still available in a 2/3-hour format and is an online training. The content of the training session is the same as the previous online training and in-person training. Training will be available online only. No training will be conducted in person.
 - To get trained, trainees will go directly to the **AFAA website: www.afaa.com**, click the “Courses” icon at the top of website, then “continuing education” and enroll in the *Arthritis Foundation Walk With Ease Leader Training Certification*.

10. Will the Arthritis Foundation provide a Walk With Ease leader certification?

Yes. Certification as an Arthritis Foundation Walk With Ease Program Leader requires:

- Successful completion of an Arthritis Foundation Walk With Ease Program Leader Training Workshop online workshop.

Leaders remain certified as long as they continue to teach at least one class series per year.

11. What are the program costs?

- The standard fee for the course is **\$89**. The instructor’s manual and posters will also be available in a downloadable PDF format for each registered trainee.

12. What are the facility requirements?

Any host agencies offering the group classes should provide:

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- An accessible site for the program consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act and any reasonable accommodation that may be necessary to ensure that the program is accessible to people with disabilities.
- A safe and accessible place to walk either inside (e.g. indoor track, gymnasium, mall, etc.) or outside (e.g., neighborhood, walking trail, etc.)