



## Activity the key to managing arthritis (图)

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19 April 2007, University of Queensland researchers have shown for the first time older women who exercise are more likely to not get stiff or painful joints.

The landmark study, published in the journal Arthritis Research & Therapy, shows women in their 70s could avoid the pain of arthritis by keeping active.

Dr Kristi Heesch, Dr Yvette Miller and Professor Wendy Brown from UQ's School of Human Movement Studies, have used data collected over three years as part of the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health, targeting middle-aged and older women who had no symptoms of arthritis.

"What we found is if women in their 70s can do as little as 75 minutes of moderate physical activity a week, they will lessen their chances of developing frequent arthritis symptoms for three years," Dr Heesch said.

"The results also suggest that engaging in at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity per week may be even more protective.

"Our results are the first to show a dose-response relationship between physical activity and arthritis symptoms in older women."

Dr Heesch said arthritis was a debilitating health problem, which is more likely to strike as people got older and affects more women than men.

"Arthritis is almost as common as cardiovascular disease in Australia, affecting 17 percent of the population," she said.

"If preventive intervention strategies, such as increasing physical activity participation by even small amounts, could delay the onset and development of symptoms of arthritis, there could be considerable cost savings to the healthcare system and to older women themselves, not to mention reductions in pain and suffering caused by this often debilitating health problem.

She said the study also looked at middle-aged women but there seemed to be no similar advantage in women of that age.

"We were surprised to find such a difference between middle-aged and older women," she said.

"One explanation is that occupational physical activity was not included in our assessment of physical activity and that many women in the mid-age cohort of the study were in paid work, whereas the older women were not."

Dr Heesch said her team is doing further research into the link between physical activity and self-reported diagnosis or treatment for arthritis.

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