

WALK WITH EASE

a program for better living

Safe and Effective: Outcomes Summary

Program Overview

Developed in 1999 and updated in 2009, the Arthritis Foundation Walk with Ease Program strives to teach participants how to safely make physical activity part of their everyday life through a workbook, and the choice of participating in a six-week group program led by a trained leader or by doing the program on a self-directed basis, using the workbook as a guide. While designed to help people living with arthritis better manage their pain, people without arthritis who want to increase or improve their physical activity habits can also derive benefits from the program.

Groups meet for six weeks, three times per week at sessions that last approximately one hour. The program can be modified to meet the needs of its participants. However, each session typically begins with a brief discussion around walking or arthritis management topics and is followed by a stretching and walking component. For participants, the only requirement for enrollment is to be able to stay on their feet for 10 minutes without increased pain. Self-directed walkers use the workbook and set their own pace. They are encouraged to build up to walking at least 30 minutes on 3 or more days a week for 6 weeks.

Walk with Ease's information and strategies are based on research and tested programs in exercise science, behavior change, and arthritis management. Evaluated by the Thurston Arthritis Research Center and the Institute on Aging at the University of North Carolina, the program has shown to increase balance, strength and walking pace, as well as reduce pain for participants. The revised Walk with Ease program decreases disability and improves arthritis symptoms, self-efficacy, and perceived control, balance, strength, and walking pace in individuals with arthritis, regardless of whether they are taking a group class or doing the program as self-directed walkers. At one year, some benefits are maintained, particularly among the self-directed. This is a safe, easy, and inexpensive program to promote community-based physical activity.

Evaluation Studies at a Glance

| Author | Design | Results |
|-------------------------|---|--|
| Group Format | | |
| Bruno, et al. 2006 | Quasi-experimental, repeated measures, retested at six months (n=163) | Increased self-efficacy, Improved physical ability, Decreased pain |
| * Callahan, et al. 2011 | Quasi-experimental, controlled trial, pre-post test design (n=462) | Improved self efficacy, strength, perceived control, balance, and walking pace Significant decrease in pain for self-directed group |
| * Nyrop, et al. 2011 | Quasi-experimental, pre-post test comparison (n=94) | Improved workplace limitations |
| Self-directed | | |
| Callahan, et al. 2011 | Quasi-experimental, controlled trial, pre-post test design (n=462) | Improved self efficacy, strength, perceived control, balance, and walking pace Significant decrease in pain for self-directed group |
| Nyrop, et al. 2011 | Quasi-experimental, pre-post test comparison (n=94) | Improved workplace limitations |

References

- Bruno, et al. (2006). Effectiveness of two Arthritis Foundation programs: Walk with Ease, and You Can Break the Pain Cycle. *Clinical Interventions in Aging*, 3, 295-306. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2695175/>
- Callahan, et al. (2011). Evaluation of group and self-directed formats of the Arthritis Foundation's Walk with Ease Program. *Arthritis Care & Research*, 63, 1098-1107.
- Nyrop, et al. (2011). The effect of a 6-week walking program on workplace activity limitations among adults with arthritis. *Arthritis Care & Research*. Accepted manuscript online: Aug 30, 2011, DOI: 10.1002/acr.20604
- Schoster, et al. (2011). Methodological tips for overcoming formative evaluation challenges: The case of the Arthritis Foundation Walk with Ease Program. *Health Promotion and Practice*. Accepted manuscript online: June 15, 2011, DOI: 10.1177/1524839910384060

* Studies are applicable to both the group and self-directed formats.