





## Established osteoarthritis Exercises to maintain joint function

### Information sheets 1 Basic general exercises

| exercise 1<br>Stretching your back   | exercise 2<br>Relaxing your shoulders   | exercise 3<br>Cardiopulmonary exercise   | exercise 4<br>Abdominal breathing  |
|--|---|--|--|
| <p><b>Why is this exercise useful?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loosens up the back.</li> <li>Maintains shoulder elevation.</li> <li>Stretches the muscles at the back of the legs.</li> </ul> <p><b>How do you do the exercise correctly?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In a standing position, place your upper body at right angles placing your hands on a chair, table or windowsill.</li> <li>Successively arch and hollow your back without raising your shoulders.</li> <li>Without releasing your hands, gently lift up one arm and then the other, like a cat stretching.</li> </ul> <p><b>TIP</b><br/>Stand with legs apart wider than your pelvis.</p>  | <p><b>Why is this exercise useful?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stretches and loosens up the shoulders.</li> </ul> <p><b>How do you do the exercise correctly?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Place yourself in a sitting position, arms hanging by your side.</li> <li>On breathing in, raise your shoulders towards your ears and hold this position for 6-7 seconds, relax your shoulders on breathing out and hold this position for 10 to 30 seconds.</li> </ul> <p><b>TIP</b><br/>Do not relax too abruptly during the first movements to avoid hurting yourself.</p>  | <p><b>Why is this exercise useful?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stimulates cardiorespiratory functions.</li> <li>Strengthens the abdominals, hips, and knees.</li> </ul> <p><b>How do you do the exercise correctly?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sit upright on a chair, arms resting on the armrests.</li> <li>Raise your knees alternately towards your chest, breathing out.</li> </ul> <p><b>TIP</b><br/>Your upper body does not move, your back remains straight and you do not arch it.</p>  | <p><b>Why is this exercise useful?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relaxes the muscles.</li> <li>Slows heart rate.</li> <li>Restores energy and is mentally relaxing.</li> </ul> <p><b>How do you do the exercise correctly?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sit on a chair, put both hands on your lower abdomen.</li> <li>Begin by breathing out pulling in your tummy; the goal is to create a "ball" that slowly inflates and deflates.</li> <li>Repeat this exercise for 5 to 10 minutes.</li> </ul> <p><b>TIP</b><br/>Intrusive thoughts can prevent you from relaxing. To improve your concentration, count each breathing movement. You may feel slightly dizzy (arrival of too much oxygen), one or two normal breaths will get you back to normal.</p>  |

#### DURATION OF EXERCISES

**Stretching movements:** you can hold the position for several seconds (6-10), stopping if it becomes too painful.

**Strengthening movements:** you can perform sets of five movements with a longer rest (about twice as long as the duration of the movement). We also recommend that you change position between exercises (from one foot to the other, for example) in order to relax the muscles that have just been working.

#### SOME SIMPLE RULES TO FOLLOW DURING THESE EXERCISES

- Work at your own pace, calmly and steadily.
- Breathe during the exercises.
- Do not force it and follow the pause time.
- Gradually increase the number of sets.

#### Authors

**Dr Françoise LAROCHE**  
Rheumatologist  
Pain Assessment and Treatment Centre  
Rheumatology Department - Saint-Antoine Hospital, Paris

**Anne LAMBERT**  
Physiotherapist  
Cochin Hospital, Paris