

Take a tip from the Tin Man

Pick the right treatment to loosen up your joints

In The Wizard of Oz, when the Tin Man started feeling a little stiff, a few squirts of oil got him dancing down a country lane in no time. While it's not as simple as keeping an oil can handy, treating your arthritis can help reduce pain, prevent or delay further damage and help you get through the day. And sure, you might even feel like doing a little two-step now and then.

Not all arthritis is alike so not all treatments are alike either. You and your doctor will work together to decide what steps are right for you based on how you're feeling, how easily you can do the things you want to do and how other treatments have worked. Treatment will most likely be a combination of:

- *Medicine to control symptoms* and in some cases slow down the disease and damage to joints. Your doctor may recommend anything from pills to creams to steroid shots. Both over-the-counter and prescription medicines can have serious side effects, so it's important to take them as directed.
- *Physical therapy* using massage, moist heat, wax treatments or cold packs.
- *Regular exercise and good nutrition* to boost flexibility, strength, and a healthy weight.
- *Splints, braces or tape* to help protect and support your joints.
- *Surgery*, in some cases, to rebuild or replace a joint such as a knee or hip.

Treatment for arthritis is ongoing. You and your doctor should update your treatment plan based on test results, how much pain and stiffness you have, and any other symptoms.

