

So, you may be hypermobile...

WHAT IS HYPERMOBILITY?

There is a large spectrum of normal flexibility. Hypermobility is when a joint moves beyond the normal range. Some hypermobility can result in instability, where the joint slips or dislocates. Hypermobility can be isolated to a single or small number of joints or can be generalized. Hypermobility can be acquired (e.g. through training for ballet, gymnastics, etc.) or part of a medical syndrome/diagnosis.

CAN I STILL EXERCISE?

YES! And you should! Exercise is the #1 treatment for hypermobile joints and related pain regardless of the underlying cause.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXERCISE/PHYSICAL THERAPY:

Ask your PT about some of these terms to help guide your exercise choices

- ◆ Emphasize exercises with little or no resistance/weight and focus on high repetitions or long holds.
- ◆ Emphasize endurance, not brute strength.
- ◆ Move slowly to help target Type I muscle fibers.
- ◆ Focus on quality of motion rather than quantity.
- ◆ Start with stabilizing the core and then move outwards to the extremities from there.
- ◆ It is normal to have poor proprioception (the ability to tell where your body is in space). Include exercises that work on balance and proprioception, and use compensation tools (like a mirror) as needed to help you tell how your body is positioned.
- ◆ Generally “closed chain” exercises are better than “open chain” exercises—improved joint stability, more proprioceptive feedback, and more functional.
- ◆ Start stabilization exercises in a neutral joint position and gradually work to end-range over time.
- ◆ Exercising in water can be a great option if you aren't able to tolerate exercise on land, but remember that the goal is to get you stable on land so that you are stable for life!

SHOULD I USE BRACES?

Braces and splints can be very helpful to stabilize your joints but there are a few ground rules:

- ◆ Use as little as you can get away with. Over-bracing can cause the muscles around the joint to become weaker and make your joint instability worse.
- ◆ Always give your muscles a chance to work first. For example, if you are going out for a hike, pack your ankle or knee braces in your pack and when you feel your muscles getting tired and your joints becoming unstable, then you can put on the braces and finish your hike!

WHAT ELSE SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT EXERCISE AND JOINT SAFETY?

The Hypermobility Syndromes Association can be a great resource for both you and your doctors:
<https://www.hypermobility.org/>

The Ehlers-Danlos Society has a lot of information that can be helpful for anyone with hypermobility, even if you do not have that particular diagnosis:
Check out their free Webinars: <https://www.ehlers-danlos.com/webinars/>

Physical therapy can help with joint hypermobility **REGARDLESS** of what is causing it.

You can start with PT right away! Share these guidelines with your therapist. Your primary care physician or insurance company can help you find a physical therapist if you don't have one.

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