

The LeannessLifestyle

Joint Pain - Options

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The saying "No pain, no gain" does NOT pertain to joint pain. When I work personally with a client I will chuckle or downright laugh at muscle burn and even some light DOMS (delayed-onset muscle soreness). That pain is okay. The pain that is NOT okay, ever, with me, is joint pain. The most common joints affected are shoulders, elbows and knees.

What follows are just some basic guidelines for you to consider if you experience joint pain acutely or even chronically. If you try all of what is below and you do not get relief in 4-6 weeks OR if it gets worse then see a doc right away and get proper treatment to begin healing.

Weightlifting does carry inherent risks. It's important you consider that when you have gotten past the honeymoon phase of early-stage growth and strength increases you will MOST likely get more muscle when you have brief periods of training on the edge. It's this training on the edge that is most risky, especially if form breaks occur. The catch 22 is that unless you train on the edge in a well-organized fashion from time to time you are likely to NOT change muscularly and end up being one of the herd you see who looks the same year after year after year. True growth is on the fringe. It's where you are working very hard and somewhat AT RISK of injury but without getting injured. I'll even go so far as to say this. Unless you train hard and heavy with a well-thought out program (like my Awesome Periodization model) on occasion you just aren't likely to get stronger and therefore, grow new muscle. All of this is just to say that I have NEVER met a man or woman who has added real, appreciable muscle who didn't experience twinges, slight joint issues and the kind of pain we'd really, rather NOT see. It's an inherent hazard of weight training and here are my basic guidelines to work around it when it happens-- not IF, when.

1. Range of motion - On any given movement that might create pain at the joint there is a certain point during the movement where the pain will be pronounced. Depending on the movement (e.g., bench press) you may be able to get an effective workout by simply shortening the range of motion slightly (i.e, instead of touching your chest with the bar stop short 1-2 inches above your chest or do board presses by having a partner place one or more 2X4 boards on your chest and then touching the boards with the bar).
2. Hand position - A fully pronated (palm facing away from you as you would during a "normal" grip on bench press) hand opens the shoulder joint and puts it MORE at risk in just about every exercise. An example for a back exercise would be Pronated Wide-grip front pull downs. This exercise is more risky than SUPINATED (palms facing you) CLOSE-GRIP PULL DOWNS. You may need to find hand positions on various upper-body exercises that are the same movement but with more of a partially supinated and/or closed shoulder. Another example is when using dumbbells for any pressing movement. It might hurt to be pronated during an incline-dumbbell press but might not hurt at all to do the press partially supinated or "reverse grip" and fully supinated. You'll have to play with it and

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see. Many big benchers still bench REVERSE GRIP meaning they grip the bar PALMS-FACING them rather than what you all consider a "normal" grip for bench press. Anthony Clark benched almost 800 pounds REVERSE GRIP.

3. Tempo with particular attention to speed within the range where pain is normally felt. There is less trauma to an affected area if it's slow within the range of motion that ordinarily causes pain. While I don't really like SUPER SLOW TRAINING (see my book) I have always said it can be good for old people, people with joint issues and people recovering from some surgery or accident etc. If going super slow in the exercise does NOT relieve pain then find another exercise.
4. Cause no further damage. What this basically says is do NOT continue to do an exercise that repetitively causes discomfort within a joint. If you run out of exercises to work a given body part because every exercise hurts then always seek medical attention by a qualified sports med. doc and/or sports med physical therapist.
5. Lighten the load - You may find that there is NO PAIN with 30 pounds but pronounced pain at 40 pounds on whatever exercise. While an injury is healing you MAY be able to get away with lightening the load and simply sticking with 8-12 reps regardless of what the workout calls for. I say, if you have run out of options to train a body part I'd rather train it light and slow than not at all.

Any time you experience pronounced joint pain you are likely causing more damage and prolonging recovery so don't "tough it out" when it comes to joint pain. Pay attention to it and react accordingly.

No Pain No Gain does NOT apply to joint pain. Only the ignorant or foolish will try and ignore joint pain and press on. If you've read this you are no longer ignorant on the subject.