

# Leader TOOLS

Keeping participants focused  
on positive lifestyle choices

JANUARY 2017

## New Beginnings

“With the new day comes new strength and new thoughts.”

~ Eleanor Roosevelt

If each new day offers us the chance to renew our strength and our thoughts, just think about what the New Year offers. January is the month of new beginnings and a chance to renew our health and wellness goals that might have been pushed aside during the past several weeks filled with holiday food, family and fun. We all know that being physically active is a crucial part of a healthy lifestyle, but knowledge is not enough...we need to take action. Encourage your regular class participants to get back on track and bring someone with them. Much like New Year resolutions, exercise adherence is better achieved when we have someone else to keep us accountable.

January is also a great time to remind participants that regular physical activity is one of the most important things they can do for their health. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) lists the following key points:

- Live longer.
- Manage weight.
- Reduce the risk for cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, metabolic syndrome, and some cancers.
- Enhance performance of daily activities and prevent falls.
- Strengthen bones and muscles, which is very important for those with arthritis! Research shows that performing moderate-intensity, low-impact aerobic activity for 130-150 minutes per week can help manage pain, perform everyday tasks, and improve quality of life.

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# COLD WEATHER EXERCISE

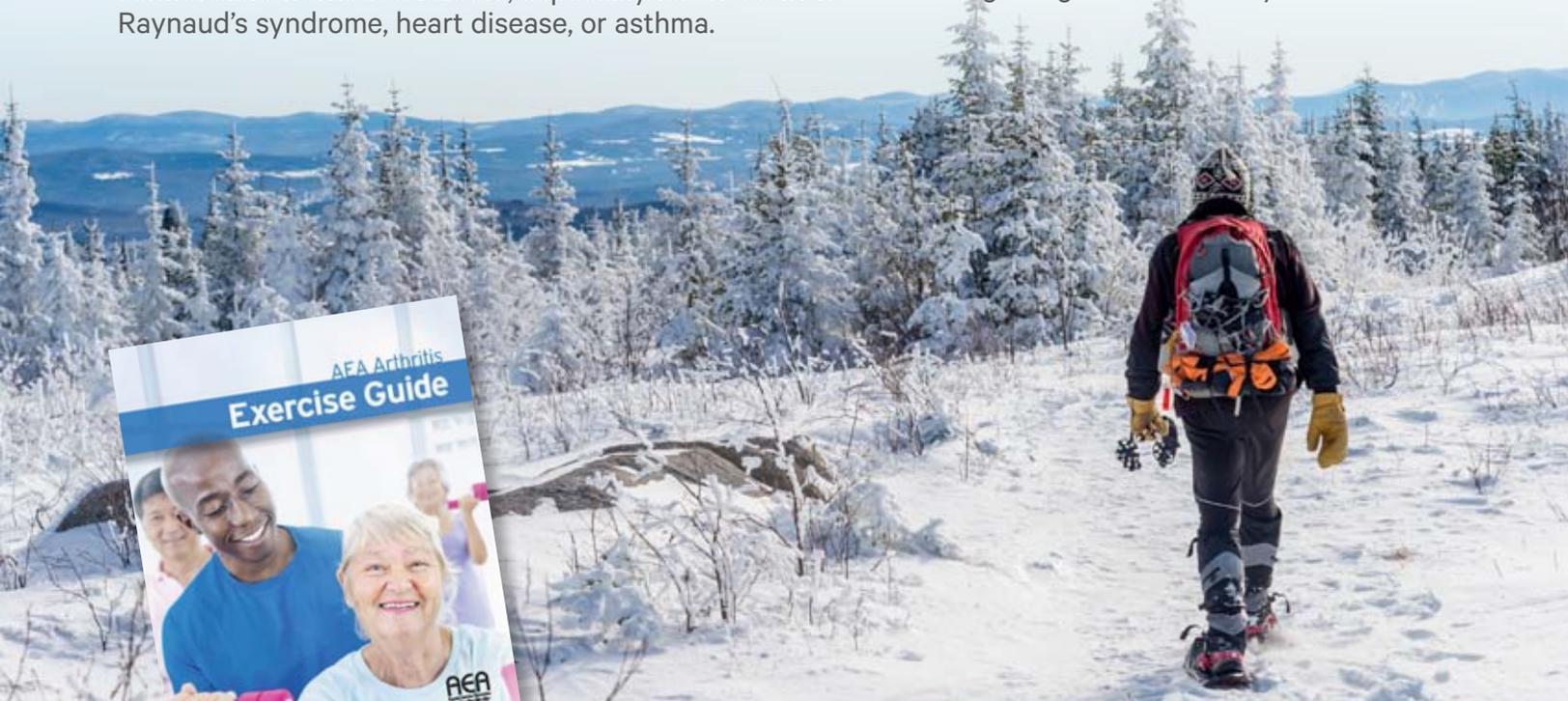
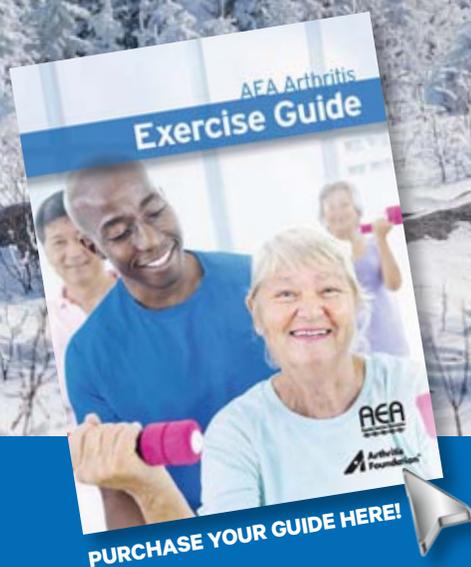
Winter may not sound like a good time to be outdoors exercising, but some people enjoy cold weather activities and snow sports. The Arthritis Foundation Living With Arthritis Blog reminds us that arthritis “has no season” and lack of activity can cause the joints to become stiff. When planning to exercise outdoors in cold weather, follow the precautions shared in the article, [10 Tips for Cold Weather Exercise with Arthritis](#).

Here is a quick summary, but you can [read the full article here](#).

- Time the exercise for later in the day when it is warmer, your joints have loosened up, and medications have had a chance to begin working.
- Dressing in layers can allow you to easily adjust clothing to stay comfortable. Pay careful attention to the hands, feet, ears, and nose when outdoors in severe temperatures.
- Stay hydrated and wear sunscreen. Yes, even in winter!
- Ice and packed snow can be slippery, so wear appropriate footwear. Plus, always let someone know where you are going and bring along a cell phone.
- Include a proper warm-up and cool-down and enjoy low-impact activities that are safer on the joints, such as walking, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing.
- Head inside. Sometimes it is just too cold for a safe, comfortable workout outdoors, especially for those with Raynaud’s syndrome, heart disease, or asthma.



To motivate your class participants to keep moving with familiar activities during the cold winter months, suggest the AEA Arthritis Exercise Guide. This 16-page booklet provides exercise benefits, precautions, and tips in addition to 15 AFEP exercises and two sample routines. This will allow class participants to continue exercising at home on days when it is too cold to be outdoors or too snowy to drive to class! Your participants can get their free personal copy of the Exercise Guide by completing the Participant Survey at AEA’s website [www.aeawave.com/Arthritis.aspx](http://www.aeawave.com/Arthritis.aspx), or you can choose to purchase copies to distribute to everyone in your class – a great gift for the new year.



Resource provided by the  
Aquatic Exercise Association  
[www.aeawave.com](http://www.aeawave.com)  
941.486.8600



# HEALTH EDUCATION

## GLAUCOMA

According to the National Eye Institute (NEI), part of the National Institutes of Health, glaucoma is a leading cause of vision loss and blindness in the US. Glaucoma has no symptoms in its early stages; however, if detected early, before noticeable vision loss occurs, it can usually be controlled. Vision lost from glaucoma cannot be restored.

Although anyone can get glaucoma, those considered to be at higher risk include:

- African Americans over age 40
- Everyone over age 60, especially Hispanics/Latinos
- People with a family history of the disease

To learn more about glaucoma, the NEI offers an informational brochure as part of the National Eye Health Education Program (NEHEP), which also shares additional available resources. Click here for the full file, [Glaucoma Facts for Community Organizations](#).

The Arthritis Foundation website explains that since rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is a systematic disease, it can affect many different parts of the body besides the joints. The eyes are one area for concern. Some people with RA will develop inflammation and scarring of the eyes. The inflammatory process can also damage the tear-producing glands, causing dryness. And, some of the drugs used to treat RA may cause cataracts and glaucoma. Thus, January can be a good month to encourage your class participants to have regular screenings.

Read more about RA and glaucoma

# FUN & GAMES

## SPEED PROGRESSION / PATTERN REPETITION

*Submitted by Debbie Knitz*

As discussed in the AEA Arthritis Foundation Program Leader manual, games, neurobics and socialization are all ways to enhance our classes. These activities can provide physical, intellectual, emotional, and social benefits. This is important because the AFAP and AFEP classes are designed to help people living with arthritis and related conditions live a more active lifestyle while improving health in a welcoming, supportive, and fun environment.

This activity combines progressive speed with pattern repetition to challenge memory and coordination, and it is sure to create a lot of smiles. Choose and teach a movement pattern; each time that you repeat the pattern, try to move a little faster. If you have a group that enjoys a little friendly competition, keep going until only a couple people remain performing the drill.

### Example:

- Right hand to left knee
- Left hand to right knee
- Right hand to left hip
- Left hand to right hip
- Right hand to left shoulder
- Left hand to right shoulder
- Both arms up then down



Resource provided by the Aquatic Exercise Association  
[www.aeawave.com](http://www.aeawave.com)  
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# EXERCISE UPDATE

## GLUTEAL SET + KEGEL EXERCISE



The GLUTEAL SET exercise performed in both the AFAP and AFEP, discuss a variation that includes pelvic floor tightening, or Kegel exercises. Karl Knopf, EdD, is the Director of Fitness Therapy and Senior Fitness at the International Sports Science Association and is on the advisory board of PBS's Sit and Be Fit Show. Dr. Knopf shares more insight into the purpose and benefits of performing Kegel exercises.

Activities such as sneezing, coughing, laughing, or changing position briefly increase the pressure inside the bladder. If the urethra is “weak” (e.g. if it doesn't have a normal amount of pressure), then urine is lost. By strengthening the pelvic muscles that support the urethra, Kegel exercises increase the pressure, thereby reducing or eliminating urinary incontinence.

“Urge” incontinence, an unexpected contraction of the bladder, may be stimulated by a cough or sneeze, or may occur spontaneously. Once the contraction starts, it builds up over a period of a few seconds and then may result in the loss of a moderate or large amount of urine. Kegel exercises have also been shown to help with urge incontinence, especially when combined with bladder retraining.

To identify the pelvic floor muscles, try stopping your urine stream. It's important to contract the pelvic muscle without contracting your abdominal muscles, which could cause you to leak urine. To test whether you're tightening the abdominal muscles, place a hand on your abdomen while you tighten your pelvic muscle. If you feel your abdomen tighten, you need to practice relaxing your abdomen while continuing to contract your pelvic muscle.

**Pelvic Floor Muscle Exercise:** First, empty your bladder. Sit or lie in a comfortable place. Now tighten your pelvic muscle without tightening your abdomen. Keep it tight for 10 seconds. Do not hold your breath! Then relax for 10 seconds. Perform 15 repetitions three times each day. If you can't hold the muscle tight for 10 seconds or can't repeat 15 times, just do it as long as you can. Your ability to perform the exercise will increase with time.

