

Successful Living with Arthritis

Keep It Moving!

Meet Ramona Smith

Ramona Smith, an 82-year-old grandmother of two, embraces a simple philosophy to life—**being active helps you feel good!** Ramona was diagnosed with osteoarthritis in 2006 but has not let the chronic disease take away her enjoyment of life. When she was first diagnosed, the osteoarthritis slowed Ramona down and she experienced constant pain. Ramona describes this phase in her life as “horrible.” Her doctor gave her shots for the pain, which worked for a while, but soon the effects of the shots wore off and she was back at her doctor’s needing another injection. Ramona did not want to get trapped in a cycle of injections to alleviate the debilitating pain in her knees and fingers. She was keen to try **a natural, safe, and effective tool** to deal with the impact the disease was having on her life.

Skepticism

One day Ramona came across some flyers in her retirement home, and little did she know they would change her life forever. The flyers were promoting an exercise class called *Walk With Ease*, created by the Arthritis Foundation and supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The *Walk With Ease* program teaches participants the skills to **manage their condition, naturally and without drugs**. People learn how effective—yet simple—walking can be to **reduce arthritis pain and improve overall health**. Ramona started reading more and more about self-management and what it actually means for someone living with a chronic disease such as arthritis.

Life Changing

At first Ramona was skeptical about the *Walk With Ease* program. Living with the daily pain of osteoarthritis, walking was the last thing she wanted to do. But she decided she had nothing to lose by going to the class, and she would try any class at her retirement home if it might help to ease her constant pain. **The 6-week program changed Ramona’s life.**

The program involved self-paced walking three times a week with an instructor and taking part in **health-related discussions**. Since then, Ramona has incorporated the techniques she has learned into her daily life and realized how a simple exercise like walking could transform her life and health.

The Walk With Ease program changed my life. Walking every day allows me to live MY life!

It is ironic, but Ramona’s osteoarthritis has actually made her more active than before her diagnosis.

Ramona walks three-quarters of a mile every morning before breakfast. She says if she does not move her knee every day, it will get stiff and sore. In addition to her morning walk, Ramona now enjoys the exercise classes at her retirement home and goes three times a week. She also loves going to the yoga class twice a week. Incorporating this regular exercise into her everyday life makes her feel, as she says, “excellent!” Ramona’s favorite activity is walking. Why? “Because it works!” she says. Since Ramona has started walking regularly she has **reduced pain, improved flexibility, more energy, increased range of motion, and a better overall quality of life.**

The former accountant from Auburn, California **does not let her osteoarthritis get in the way of living her life, her way.** She keeps active for herself, her two daughters, and her two grandchildren. Ramona’s only regret is that she wishes she had known more about staying active when she was younger. The straight-talking 82-year-old encourages everyone to go to an exercise class and says “you’re foolish if you don’t exercise.” Ramona’s number one tip to others is easy for everyone to understand and adopt, **“Get active and keep moving!”**