



Avoiding Cabin Fever

by YVONNE BANKS

Osteoarthritis and Cabin Fever

Anyone who lives where there is cold weather and harsh wintry conditions can suffer from cabin fever when they can't get outside and enjoy the things they do on warmer days. However, if you suffer from OA you may have this problem even on warm, sunny days.

Pain and discomfort may keep you at home a lot of the time, because it is too agonizing to leave to do the most menial tasks. But it isn't healthy to stay home without any type of socialization. There are ways to combat cabin fever and avoid becoming isolated from the world.

What to Do About Cabin Fever

- **Stay connected with family and friends:** It is very important to stay in touch with the people you love. If you are socially isolated, it is difficult to cope with your OA and can lead to higher pain levels and dissatisfaction with life. Having contact with others gets the focus off of you and your problems. Some people have a gift for uplifting anyone's spirits; choose those people to talk to on a regular basis.
- **Use technology:** If you do not have a computer or internet, it is a worthy investment to keep in touch with family and friends, especially if they live far away. If you do not have a clue to how to use a computer, find an eager teenage relative to teach you the basics of a computer. Programs like Skype offer video chatting so you are able to see who you are talking to and they can see you. This is especially nice if you have OA of the fingers or wrist and you cannot type much to send emails.
- **Use community services in your area:** You should not let your OA keep you from being out of the home. If you struggle to drive, look for transportation services that assist people with transportation needs. Meals on Wheels can ensure you get a meal and also the opportunity to see someone once a day you can chat with. Churches are available to reach out and send volunteers to visit. Church members may offer to transport to church if you wish to attend.
- **Take up a hobby:** Whether it's stamp collecting or reading or
- **See if physical therapy can visit:** You may need to be evaluated on strengthening and stability to see if you can have regular rehabilitation therapy to address any issues with gait and other problems. A physical therapist can recommend any assistive devices that may help you gain more independence and be able to leave the house with confidence.
- **Ask for help:** Don't be too proud to ask for help when you need it. Ask for a ride to go grocery shopping or to visit a park. Many people are more than willing to help out.