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UNDERSTANDING THE BASICS OF JOINT MOBILIZATIONS AS A REHABILITATION TOOL

Joint mobilizations are skilled, slow, passive movements of the articular joint surfaces performed by clinicians (ie, athletic trainers, physical therapists, occupational therapists) to assess joint arthrokinematics and, when indicated, to decrease pain and/or increase joint mobility within the anatomical limit of a joint's range of motion (ROM). They are one of the most commonly used manual therapy techniques in the treatment of joint restriction and often accompany ROM and stretching exercises to address the limitations that effect joint mobility.

A loss of normal osteokinematic and arthrokinematic motion can often be observed following a traumatic event (ie, fractures, joint injuries) and during periods of immobilization due to periarticular connective tissue changes.[1] If left untreated, joint hypomobility (a decrease in the normal movement of a joint or body part) can result in decreased joint nutrition, early joint degeneration, pain, and loss of mobility. Because of this, the importance of restoring joint mobility after an acute injury or periods of immobilization is often emphasized in rehabilitation protocols, and proper recovery of joint motion becomes a vital component of any rehabilitation program. Selecting appropriate intervention strategies to restore passive and active joint motion in concordance with the reason for lost motion decreases the risk of developing recurrent injury and reduces the chances of limitations in functional activities (ie, walking, running, and jumping) with long-term pain and disability. Therefore, the ultimate goal of restoring motion is to reduce impairments and enhance functional performance for activities of daily living (ADLs), work, and leisure activities.[2]

Joint mobilizations differ from passive ROM and stretching techniques because joint mobilizations address the intra-articular tissue that is causing limitations in the joint vs the surrounding muscular structures of the joint. The literature describes 3 types of joint mobilizations: (1) oscillations, (2) sustained-translatory joint play, and (3) manipulations (beyond the scope of

Berry DC, Berry LM. *Cram Session in Joint Mobilization Techniques: A Handbook for Students & Clinicians* (pp 1-19).