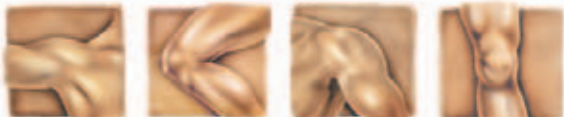


Focus ON JOINTS

FACTS AND INFORMATION ABOUT JOINT HEALTH



All About ARTHRITIS

Half of all people age 65 and older have arthritis. There are over 100 different forms of arthritis with various symptoms and treatments. Arthritis causes pain and loss of movement. It can affect joints in any part of the body. Arthritis is usually chronic, meaning it can occur over a long period of time. The more serious forms can cause swelling, warmth, redness and pain. The most common forms of arthritis in older people are osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis and gout.

Common Forms of Arthritis

Osteoarthritis is the most common type of arthritis. Sometimes it is called degenerative joint disease. Symptoms range from stiffness and mild pain that comes and goes, to severe joint pain and even disability. Osteoarthritis usually affects the hands and the large weight-bearing joints of the body - knees and hips. Osteoarthritis is one of the most frequent causes of physical disability among adults. By 2030, 20% of Americans - about 70 million people - will be at risk for osteoarthritis. Some younger people get osteoarthritis from joint injuries, but most often it occurs in older people.

Rheumatoid arthritis can be one of the more disabling forms of arthritis. Signs of rheumatoid arthritis often include morning stiffness, swelling in three or more joints, swelling of the same joints on both sides of the body (both hands, for example) and bumps under the skin more commonly found near the elbow. Rheumatoid arthritis can occur at any age. It affects women about three times more often than men.

Gout occurs most often in men 40 to 50 years of age. It affects the toes, ankles, elbows, wrists and hands. An acute attack of gout is very painful. Swelling may cause the skin to pull tightly around the joint and make the area red or purple and very tender. Medications may stop gout attacks or prevent further attacks.



COMMON WARNING SIGNS OF ARTHRITIS

- Swelling in one or more joint(s)
- Morning stiffness lasting 30 minutes or longer
- Joint pain or tenderness that is constant or that comes and goes
- Redness or warmth in a joint

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HOW TO CARE FOR YOURSELF

Arthritis is rarely life threatening, but the pain, stiffness and fatigue can have a big impact on the quality of life. Here are some tips that can improve your health or make living with arthritis easier.

If you have pain, stiffness or swelling in or around a joint for more than two weeks, it is time to see your doctor. Only a doctor can tell if it is arthritis. Ask for a specific diagnosis if they say “you have arthritis” since there are over 100 types and each one has a different treatment. You can only get the proper treatment if you have an accurate diagnosis.

Start early

The sooner you get a correct diagnosis and start treatment, the better you'll feel. It also could mean less joint damage and less pain.

Project your joints

Stop joint pain before it starts. Here are some tips for protecting your joints:

- Use the proper method for bending, lifting, reaching, sitting and standing.
- Do not stay in one position for a long period of time. Try to move or change positions often.
- Stay close to your recommended weight.
- Keep away from activities that cause pain to your joints.



Get moving

Starting to exercise can be hard, but in a short time you will feel better. Exercise can lessen pain, increase your range of motion, cut down on fatigue and, overall, help you feel better. Talk to your doctor about exercises that are best for you.



Eat a healthy diet

Because there are more than 100 types of arthritis, no single diet will help everyone. However, doctors strongly recommend that people with arthritis or related conditions follow a diet based on variety, balance and moderation. This means eating a variety of foods, including plenty of vegetables, fruits and whole grain products. It means using sugar, salt and fats in moderation and taking the daily recommended dose of vitamins and minerals, including calcium.

Treatments

Treatments for arthritis work to reduce pain and swelling, keep joints moving safely and to avoid further damage to joints. These include medications, exercise, use of heat or cold, weight control and surgery.

Medicines help relieve pain and reduce swelling. Acetaminophen (Tylenol®) is often used to control pain in patients with osteoarthritis. Patients may also be treated with anti-inflammatory drugs like ibuprofen (Motrin®).

Exercise, such as a daily walk or swim, helps keep joints moving, reduces pain and strengthens muscles around the joints.

Many people find that soaking in a warm bath, swimming in a heated pool, or applying heat or cold to the area around the joint helps reduce pain. Controlling or losing weight can reduce the stress on joints and can help avoid further damage.

When damage to the joints becomes disabling or when other treatments fail to reduce pain, your doctor may suggest surgery. Surgeons can repair or replace damaged joints. The most common operations are hip and knee replacements.





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