

UNDERSTANDING ARTHRITIS

Information about the
leading cause of chronic
disability in the U.S.



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DEFINITION

Arthritis is the number one cause of chronic disability in the United States. Affecting nearly 70 million Americans, it refers to more than 100 diseases that cause pain, stiffness and swelling from the inflammation of a joint or the area around joints.

TYPES OF ARTHRITIS

There are over 100 types of arthritis. The three most common kinds of arthritis are:

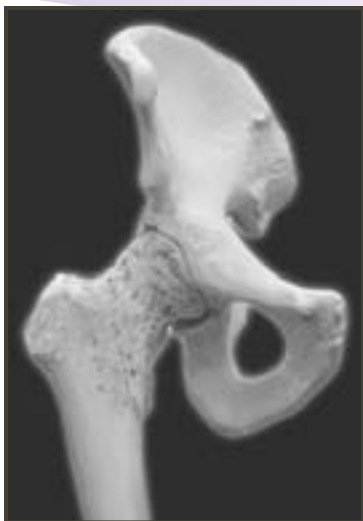
- **Osteoarthritis:** Is the most common type of arthritis affecting about 20.7 million Americans, usually middle-aged and older people. This is a noninflammatory degenerative joint disease characterized by the break-down of the joint's cartilage. The exact cause of osteoarthritis is unknown.
- **Fibromyalgia:** Is the second most common type of arthritis affecting 3.7 million Americans, mostly women; 80 to 90 percent of people who develop this disease are women aged



Healthy Hip: In a healthy hip, cartilage cushions the area surrounding the hip ball and socket to allow easy movement without pain.

20 to 50. Fibromyalgia is a disease involving pain in muscles or joints with no clinical signs of infection. It is often misdiagnosed as chronic fatigue syndrome, and usually does not require surgery.

- ***Rheumatoid Arthritis:*** Is a chronic, systemic disease with inflammatory changes occurring throughout the body's connective tissues. It affects 2.1 million Americans. It is characterized by the inflammation of the membrane



Unhealthy Hip: In an unhealthy hip, the cartilage is damaged or worn away causing pain from bones rubbing and grinding together.

lining the joint, which leads to pain, stiffness, redness, and swelling and can result in loss of movement, loss of shape and alignment and sometimes complete destruction of the joint. It affects two to three times more women than men.

Other serious and fairly common forms of arthritis include: gout, systemic lupus erythematosus (lupus), scleroderma, ankylosing spondylitis and juvenile arthritis.

DEMOGRAPHICS

You're not alone if you have arthritis as almost 70 million Americans -- that's one in three people -- suffer from arthritis.

The prevalence of arthritis increases from age 45, and usually lasts a lifetime. Seven million Americans are limited in doing activities such as dressing, climbing stairs, getting into and out of bed and exercising because of arthritis. This number is estimated to grow to 12 million by 2020.

More women than men have arthritis. Forty-one million American women have arthritis which accounts for over half of all Americans with the disease.

Arthritis affects people of all ages, including children. Juvenile arthritis affects about 285,000 children.

Arthritis costs the U.S. economy \$64.8 billion per year in medical care and lost wages.

ECONOMIC COSTS

An average of eight visits per person are made annually to physicians for arthritis (twice the average number of visits to physicians per person for all causes).

Arthritis accounts for 427 million days of restricted activity, 156 million days in bed and 45 million days lost from work each year.

CAUSES

The causes of the 100 types of arthritis are unknown. Because there are so many different forms of arthritis, the causes are likely to vary.

Scientists are currently examining how the roles of major factors including genetics and lifestyles affect the development of arthritis.



Healthy Knee: In a healthy knee, cartilage protects and cushions bone surfaces that come together at the joint allowing bones to move without friction.

There are several factors that can contribute to developing arthritis. Some are within the control of the individual:

- ***Maintain a Healthy Weight:***

Excess weight increases your risk for developing osteoarthritis in the knees, and possibly the hips and hands.

- ***Be Careful:***

Joint injuries from accidents or overuse increase your risk for some kinds of arthritis.

Other factors are not within the control of the individual:



Unhealthy Knee: In an unhealthy knee, cartilage is damaged or worn away causing pain from bones rubbing together.

- **Genetic Factors:** You can inherit certain genes that may increase your risk for some types of arthritis.

More research is needed to determine how to reduce your risk from these factors.

SIGNS OF ARTHRITIS

Pain from arthritis can be continuous or intermittent. Pain may occur after activity or exercise, but it may also happen even if you've been resting and still for a period of time. Pain may be concentrated

in one spot or you may feel it all over your body.

Joints may feel stiff and difficult to move. Daily chores such as climbing stairs and opening jars may become a challenge. You may notice that pain is more severe during certain times of the day or after performing certain tasks.

Some kinds of arthritis cause swelling or inflammation. The skin over the joint may appear swollen and red, and feel hot when touched. Arthritis may also cause fatigue.

DIAGNOSIS

Early diagnosis and treatment tailored to an individual's needs are crucial in slowing or preventing damage to joints.

Only a physician can determine if you have arthritis and what type it is. Arthritis is diagnosed based on the overall pattern of symptoms, medical history, physical exam, x-rays and lab tests.

Before you schedule an appointment with a physician, make sure you have answers to the following:

- ***Where it hurts***
- ***When it hurts***
- ***When it first began to hurt***
- ***How long it has hurt***
- ***If you have seen any swelling***
- ***What daily tasks are hard to do now***
- ***If you have ever hurt the joint in an accident or overused it on the job or in a hobby***
- ***If anyone in your family has had similar problems***

A doctor will also move the joint that hurts to see how much it can move. He will check for swelling, tender points, and skin rashes.

Your doctor should tell you:

- ***If it's arthritis***
- ***What type it is***
- ***What to expect***
- ***What you can do about it***

TREATMENTS

Because there are so many types of arthritis, each type of arthritis has different symptoms and treatments. The good news is that many things work to help control arthritis. Care for arthritis often involves more than one type of treatment. Treatment may vary over time and may be different depending on the kind of arthritis.

It is important that you begin treatment early and discuss treatment options with your doctor on a regular basis. Although finding the right treatment may take time, it will enable you to lead an active lifestyle.

Treatments for arthritis can be divided into several categories including:

- **Medication:** Many drugs, both prescriptions and over-the-counter medications, are used to treat arthritis. Common medications are aspirin-free pain relievers, anti-inflammatories, corticosteroids, disease modifiers, and sleep medications.

- **Exercise:** Regular exercise is important to keep the body moving and flexible. It helps to lessen pain, increase movement, reduce fatigue, and helps you look and feel better.
- **Heat or Cold:** Use of heat or cold over joints provides short-term relief from pain and stiffness.
- **Pacing Activities:** Pacing helps protect your joints by alternating periods of activity with periods of rest so that your joints don't tire from the stress of repeated tasks.
- **Joint Protection:** Joints can be protected by learning to use them in ways that avoid excess stress. One way of doing this is to avoid using sore and weak joints. Unless larger joints are sore, for example, it is best to use them when carrying heavy items. The second method is walking with assistive devices. Lastly, weight control helps ease pain by reducing stress on your joints.
- **Self-Help Skills:** You can learn ways to better manage how arthritis affects you emotionally by talking about your feelings with family members and

friends, doing mental exercises, and by joining your local arthritis support group.

- **Surgery:** Most people will not need surgery, but in severe cases surgery is effective in eliminating pain when other treatment methods have failed.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

No cure currently exists for most types of arthritis. In the majority of cases, however, people with arthritis can continue to perform normal daily activities. And in severe cases, total joint replacement enables a person with arthritis in the hip or knee to walk without pain or stiffness.

Research provides a hope for a future world that will be arthritis-free. Recent research progress includes:

- **Genetic Materials:** Manipulation of genetic materials reduces inflammation that is damaging to the joints in osteoarthritis.

- ***Development of Leumedins:***
This new class of drugs blocks destructive inflammation in diseases including rheumatoid arthritis.
- ***Regular Exercise:*** Exercise is shown to be beneficial for knee osteoarthritis.
- ***Weight:*** Losing weight is proven to be successful in helping to prevent knee osteoarthritis.

Future research developments include:

- ***Advances in Molecular Biology:***
These increase the ability to target treatment sites, enzyme treatments, and genetic engineering.
- ***Immune System:*** Researchers are improving their understanding and manipulation of the immune system.
- ***Biologic Response Modifiers:***
The use of naturally occurring substances in the body to intervene and alter the immune response in people with inflammatory arthritis.

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