

Arthritis: How to Prevent it, How to Treat

Arthritis is a major public health problem. It affects nearly 1 out of 4 Americans over the age 18, is the leading cause of disability, and costs over a hundred billion dollars in medical fees and lost productivity. Luckily, arthritis is not difficult to prevent or alleviate if you take the right precautions.

What Is Arthritis?

Arthritis is actually made up of at least 100 different diseases and

conditions, with **osteoarthritis** being the most common. Other frequently occurring forms of arthritis include rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, fibromyalgia, and gout.

Common symptoms include pain, aching, stiffness, and swelling in or around the joints. Some forms of arthritis, such as rheumatoid arthritis and lupus, can affect multiple organs and cause widespread symptoms.

Who is at Risk?

Although arthritis is more common among adults aged 65 years or older, everyone can be affected, including younger people. Nearly two-thirds of people with arthritis are younger than 65 years, and 1 out of 250 children have arthritic conditions. Arthritis is more common among women (24.3%) than men (18.7%) in every age group, and it affects members of all racial and ethnic group, though blacks and Hispanics have particularly high rates of severe pain and activity restriction. It is also more common among adults who are obese than among those who are normal weight or underweight.



What Can Be Done?

Learn techniques to manage arthritis. Self-management education interventions such as the Arthritis Foundation Self-Help Program can teach people how to manage arthritis and lessen its effects. In multiple studies, this intervention was consistently found to improve people's health by reducing depression, fatigue, and health distress.

Although these types of programs are effective, they are not available to everyone who needs them. More widespread use of this intervention and similar courses, such as the Chronic Disease Self-Management Program, which addresses arthritis along with other chronic diseases, will improve quality of life for people with arthritis.

Be physically active. For people with arthritis, physical activities such as walking, bicycling, and swimming have been shown to have significant benefits, including reducing pain and improving physical function, mental health, and quality of life.

Maintain a healthy weight and protect your joints. Weight control and injury prevention measures can lower a person's risk of developing osteoarthritis. Weight loss also can reduce symptoms for overweight or obese people with knee osteoarthritis.

Consult a physician.

Early diagnosis and appropriate management are especially important for people with inflammatory arthritis. Consulting with a physician is often very influential for treatment. For more information please visit <http://www.cdc.gov/arthritis/>

HIGHLIGHTS

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Physical activity, a healthy diet, and consultations with your doctor are vital for treatment and prevention.

For more health topics, visit www.dadehealth.org/atoz/atoz.asp