



Live Healthy Georgia— Seniors Taking Charge Arthritis

May 2011 Newsletter
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May is Arthritis Awareness Month! Let's learn more about the condition that is the most common cause of disability in the United States.

What is arthritis?

Arthritis is when you have pain or stiffness in one or more of your joints (where two bones meet). Joints can become swollen and damaged. The most common types of arthritis in the United States are osteoarthritis, gout, fibromyalgia, and rheumatoid arthritis.

Osteoarthritis

The most common type of arthritis is osteoarthritis. With osteoarthritis, the cartilage, which covers the bones in the joint, is broken down. This causes the bones to rub together and cause pain, stiffness, swelling, redness, and less motion. Causes of osteoarthritis include aging, overweight, and joint injury.

Gout

Gout occurs when uric acid builds up in the joints and causes the joint to become swelled and inflamed. The causes of gout are unknown, although males, postmenopausal women, those who

drink alcohol, and those who take certain medications may have higher levels of uric acid. In addition, those with diabetes, kidney disease, obesity, sickle cell anemia, and leukemia may be more likely to develop gout.

Fibromyalgia

Fibromyalgia is a syndrome in which individuals have widespread muscular pains and fatigue. Other symptoms may include sleep disturbance, psychological stress, and tingling or numbness in hands and feet. The causes of fibromyalgia are not known, but genetics and physical and emotional stress may contribute.

Rheumatoid Arthritis

Rheumatoid arthritis is an autoimmune disease in which the body's immune system attacks the body's own tissues. It causes swelling, redness, and pain in the joints and can also affect other body parts, such as the eyes, mouth, and lungs.

What are the warning signs of arthritis?



If any of the following symptoms last for more than 2 weeks, contact your healthcare provider:

- Constant joint pain
- Joint swelling
- Joint stiffness
- Tenderness or pain when touching a joint
- Problems using a joint normally
- Joint warmth and redness

How is arthritis managed?

Most arthritis treatment focuses on controlling pain, minimizing joint damage, and improving or maintaining function and quality of life. Medical treatment, determined by a healthcare provider, may also include medication, therapies such as physical therapy or weight loss, or surgery.

Can you exercise safely with arthritis?

Physical activity can actually reduce pain and improve function, mobility, mood, and quality of life for most adults with arthritis. The recommended amount of exercise is:

- **150 minutes of low-impact, moderate-intensity aerobic activities every week** (any activity that makes your heart beat faster and you breathe harder than when sitting, such as brisk walking, cycling, swimming, gardening, group exercise classes, and dancing)
- **Muscle strengthening exercises 2 or more days a week** (such as weight training and resistance band training)

- **Balance exercises 3 days per week** to decrease your risk of falls (such as walking backwards, standing on one foot, and tai chi)

As with any new exercise routine, be sure to talk to your healthcare provider to determine what is best for you. You can break your activity up into smaller amounts, such as in 10 minute intervals, to help you meet your recommended levels. Remember that any physical activity is better than none, and the benefits of physical activity outweigh the risks!

What resources are available for those with arthritis?

There are several helpful websites listed below. If you think you have symptoms of arthritis, be sure to talk to your healthcare provider.

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,
<http://www.cdc.gov/arthritis/index.htm>
- PubMed Health,
<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedhealth/PMH0002223/>
- Arthritis Foundation,
<http://www.arthritis.org/>
- National Institute on Aging,
<http://www.nia.nih.gov/HealthInformation/Publications/arthritis.htm>

References:

Information for this newsletter was obtained from the above websites.