

CDC Tips for Living with Arthritis



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Arthritis is the most common cause of disability in the United States, disabling 8.6 million adults and limiting the activities of nearly 19 million adults in all. CDC's Arthritis Program is currently working to improve the quality of life for people affected by arthritis by raising awareness about the disease and showing what they can do to manage it themselves.

Arthritis types include osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, gout, systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE or lupus), fibromyalgia, and childhood arthritis.

The number of adults with doctor-diagnosed arthritis is projected to increase from 46 million now to 67 million by 2030, and more than one-third of these adults will have limited activity as a result. In addition, a recent study indicated that some form of arthritis or other rheumatic condition affects 1 in every 250 children.

Can I prevent arthritis?

Maintaining an appropriate body weight has been shown to decrease the risk of developing osteoarthritis and gout. **Protecting your joints from injuries** or overuse can reduce the risk of osteoarthritis.

Certain arthritis risk factors cannot be controlled such as:

- **Age:** chances of developing arthritis increase with age.
- **Gender:** 60 percent of the people with arthritis are women. Gout is more common in men.
- **Genetic:** Specific genes are associated with a higher risk of certain types of arthritis.

What should I do if I think I have arthritis?

For people who suspect they may have a form of arthritis, it is helpful to see a doctor to find out what type of arthritis it is. Although there is no cure for most types of arthritis, early diagnosis and appropriate management are important, especially for inflammatory types of arthritis. The sooner you know about your disease the sooner you can begin to make lifestyle changes that will make managing your disease easier.

What can I do on my own to help my arthritis?

The goal in managing arthritis is to control pain, minimize joint damage, and improve or maintain function and quality of life. **Engaging in physical activity or participating in self management education** to learn techniques to reduce pain, move more easily, and use medicines appropriately are proven ways to help you improve your quality of life.

Many people with arthritis also have other chronic illnesses such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease, for which physical activity and maintaining a healthy weight are also recommended. It is especially important that people with arthritis **include the recommended amounts of physical activity** as a part of their lifestyle. Physical activity is one major, non-pharmacological way to effectively reduce arthritis symptoms such as pain, fatigue, and stiffness.

Self-management Activities:

- Learn Arthritis Management Strategies
- Be Active
- Watch your Weight
- See your Doctor
- Protect your Joints

More information about specific programs that CDC has found to be effective in helping people with arthritis can be found at

<http://www.cdc.gov/arthritis/interventions.htm>