

# Arthritis: The Facts

## ARTHRITIS AFFLICTS MANY PEOPLE

Chances are that you or someone you know has arthritis. Arthritis affects 37 million Americans. That is one in every seven people, and one in every three families. When one member of a family has arthritis, it has an impact on everyone in the family.

Arthritis is a serious disease that causes pain and loss of movement. It affects the movements you rely on for everyday activities. Arthritis is usually chronic. This means that it can last on and off for a lifetime.

People of all ages, including children and young adults can develop arthritis. But, many things can be done to help people with arthritis.

## THERE ARE MANY KINDS OF ARTHRITIS

The term arthritis refers to more than 100 related diseases, which are known as rheumatic diseases. Each disease has varying symptoms and treatments. If you or a family member has arthritis, it's important to ask your doctor which kind, because treatments differ for each.

□ **Ankylosing Spondylitis** affects men more than women. Inflammation results in fusion of the bones in the spine. Shoulders, hip and other joints can also be affected.

□ **Gout** affects men more often than women. It occurs when the body is unable to properly use a substance called uric acid. Excess uric acid forms needle like crystals in the joint and leads to chronic inflammation.

□ **Juvenile arthritis** refers to several kinds of arthritis that affect children, such as juvenile rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, and scleroderma and ankylosing spondylitis. In some children, the disease will quiet down as they approach adult years.

□ **Osteoarthritis** is the most common kind of arthritis. It involves the breakdown of tissues that allow joints to move smoothly. This disease commonly affects weight bearing joints, such as the hips, knees and ankles, but can affect the spine and hands.

□ **Osteoporosis** generally affects women over the age of 45 years. Decreased levels of estrogen, low levels of Calcium, smoking, alcohol and lack of exercise may weaken bones. This disease commonly causes fractures in the wrist, spine and hips.

□ **Rheumatoid Arthritis** affects women more than men. A fault in the body's immune system causes inflammation that commonly affects the joints in the hands and feet but can also affect other parts of the body.

## MANY THINGS CAN BE DONE

There are ways to control arthritis. It's important that treatment begins early. When pain or swellings persist, consult a doctor as soon as possible.

Your care may involve more than one kind of treatment. The kinds of treatment you use may change over time and for different kinds of arthritis. Treatment may involve one or more of the following:

- Rest and relaxation
- Aquatic Therapy
- Exercise and strengthening
- Use of heat or cold
- Joint protection
- Weight loss
- Self-help aids
- Medications
- Surgery

People with arthritis have an important role in their own care. Arthritis may require changes in lifestyle, but most people with arthritis still lead active lives.

You may see or hear stories about various remedies to treat or cure arthritis. Some may be the result of new research, others may be unproven remedies. If you are in doubt, check with your doctor or local chapter of the arthritis foundation. FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT: [www.arthritisday.org](http://www.arthritisday.org)



Sitting in chair with abs contracted, extend your leg with foot up and knee straight. Slightly raise your thigh off the chair, lower, then repeat with other leg. Do this 10 times both legs.

Holding weights at your sides, palms facing upward, bend your elbows, bringing your hands up. Keeping your arms by your side, lower your hands slowly and repeat 10 times with each arm.



Using a chair or table, stand on one leg with other foot wrapped around your ankle. Rise up on the ball of your foot, tightening your abs and buttock. Alternate and work on the other leg.



Standing straight and tall, lightly brace yourself on a counter or desk. Tighten your abdominal muscles and outer thigh as you raise your leg to the side, knee straight and foot up. Repeat 10 times each leg.



Sitting up straight and tall in a chair, clasp your arms behind your head with your elbows back. Tighten your abs as you bring your opposite knee up toward your opposite elbow. Alternate sides.