



The Beacon

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Med-Cert Medical Management Resources

"Guiding your way to better health management"

What Is Arthritis?

There are over 100 types of arthritis, including osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, and gout. The word "arthritis" means "joint inflammation." Inflammation is one of the body's natural reactions to disease or injury, and includes swelling, pain, and stiffness. Inflammation that lasts for a very long time or recurs, as in arthritis, can lead to tissue damage.

A joint is where two or more bones come together, such as the hip or knee. The bones of a joint are covered with a smooth, spongy material called cartilage, which cushions the bones and allows the joint to move without pain. The joint is lined by a thin film of tissue called the synovium. The synovium's lining produces a slippery fluid called synovial fluid that nourishes the joint and helps reduce friction. Strong bands of tissue, called ligaments, connect the bones and help keep the joint stable. Muscles and tendons also support the joints and enable you to move.

With arthritis, an area in or around a

joint becomes inflamed, causing pain, stiffness and, sometimes, difficulty moving.

Types of Arthritis

There are more than 100 different types of arthritis. Some of the more common types include:

Osteoarthritis. This is the most common type of arthritis. It occurs when the cartilage covering the end of the bones gradually wears away. Without the protection of the cartilage, the bones begin to rub against each other and the resulting friction leads to pain and swelling. Osteoarthritis can occur in any joint, but most often affects the hands and weight-bearing joints such as the knee, hip and facet joints (in the spine).

Rheumatoid arthritis. Rheumatoid arthritis is a long-lasting disease that can affect joints in any part of the body but most commonly the hands, wrists, and knees. With rheumatoid arthritis, the immune system -- the body's defense system against disease -- mistakenly attacks itself and causes the joint lining to swell. The inflammation then spreads to the surrounding tissues, and can

eventually damage cartilage and bone.

Gout. Gout is a painful condition that occurs when the body cannot eliminate a natural substance called uric acid. The excess uric acid forms needle-like crystals in the joints that cause swelling and severe pain. Gout most often affects the big toe, knee and wrist joints.

What are the symptoms?

Different types of arthritis have different symptoms and the symptoms vary in severity from person to person. Osteoarthritis does not generally cause any symptoms outside the joint. Symptoms of other types of arthritis may include fatigue, fever, a rash and the signs of joint inflammation, including:

- Pain
- Swelling
- Stiffness
- Tenderness
- Redness
- Warmth

What causes Arthritis?

There are many different types of arthritis and the cause of most types is not known. It's likely that there are

many different causes. Researchers 1. are examining the role of genetics (heredity) and lifestyle behaviors in the development of arthritis.

How Is Arthritis Diagnosed?

Osteoarthritis is typically diagnosed with a complete medical history, including a description of your symptoms, and physical examination. Imaging techniques—such as X-rays or magnetic resonance imaging (MRI)—are sometimes used to show the condition of the joints. If other types of arthritis are suspected, laboratory tests on blood, urine and/or joint fluid may be helpful in 1. determining the type of arthritis. These tests also can help rule out other diseases as the cause of your symptoms.

How is it treated?

The goal of treatment is to provide pain relief and increase joint mobility and strength. Treatment options include medication, exercise, 1. heat/cold compresses, use of joint protection and surgery. Your treatment plan may involve more than one of these options.



Ask A Nurse

Q: If I have one or more of the risk factors for osteoporosis, does that mean that I probably have the disease but don't know it?

A: **Not necessarily.** Your health care professional will take into account a number of factors in determining your likelihood of developing osteoporosis. These include your personal health history, your individual osteoporosis risks, your lifestyle and the results of a bone mineral density (BMD) test.

Q: What can I do to reduce my cholesterol level without taking medications?

A: **Talk to your health care professional** for the best strategy based on your personal and family health history. Lifestyle changes are just as effective as medication in lowering cholesterol for most people.

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Q: At 240 pounds, I have more than 80 pounds to lose. I feel like I'll never achieve that. Should I just give up?

A: **No.** Losing as little as five to 10 percent of your body weight—in your case, 12 to 24 pounds—can significantly improve your health. Health care professionals recommend that your first effort at losing weight should be at this level followed by a period of maintenance before trying to lose more.

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Q: Are tanning beds safer than the sun?

A: **No.** Tanning beds not only inflict the same type of skin and eye damage as the sun, but also may be as much as 20 times stronger than natural sunlight.

April is Alcohol Awareness Month

To recognize the serious problem of alcohol abuse, April is designated "Alcohol Awareness Month."

If you suspect that you might have a drinking problem, or you know someone who abuses alcohol, please contact SAMHSA's Health Information Network at 1-877-SAMHSA-7.



Recipe Corner

NATURAL DYES FOR EASTER EGGS

Red:

- 2 pounds beets, peeled, diced

Yellow/tan:

- 1 pound onion skins

Yellow/orange:

- 1 1/2 cup (1.9 ounce) jar turmeric

Purple:

- 2 small heads red cabbage, sliced

Warm brown:

- 1 (6-cup) pot of strong coffee
- Distilled white vinegar

Directions

For all but the coffee color, in a 5 quart saucepan add 1 vegetable or ingredient. Add 4 quarts water, bring to a boil and cook for 1/2 hour or until the color is very dark. Allow to cool to room temperature and strain out vegetables. Add 1/4 cup distilled white vinegar and then add hard boiled eggs to each color. Refrigerate overnight. For the coffee color: brew the coffee. Allow to cool to room temperature. Add 1/4 cup distilled white vinegar, add hard boiled eggs, refrigerate overnight.

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