

## Getting a Grip on Arthritis

Arthritis is considered the leading cause for disability in America, with more than 53 million adults and 300,000 children suffering from its symptoms. "Arthritis" is a loose term, referring to over 100 different types that are related to joint inflammation and pain. Each one is unique and usually requires some form of treatment – otherwise, it could become a chronic condition.

Degenerative arthritis, the most common form of the condition, occurs when excess weight, genetics, or previous damage causes the cushions on the end of the bones to deteriorate leaving bare bones to grind against one another. But regardless of type, all share such similar characteristics as swelling, inflammation and pain if not treated.

Arthritis has been proven to get worse or become more likely as a person gets older, but it is possible to start seeing symptoms at an earlier age. Swollen joints or pain may be a sign that you need to see your family doctor for more assistance.

To check for possible arthritis, a physician may run a blood test, perform a physical examination, or require an X-ray. Patients who have chronic or inflammatory arthritis may be referred to a rheumatologist. No matter what causes arthritis, one thing is for sure: the earlier it is caught, the more likely it is for successful treatment.



## Pain, Pain Go Away (and Don't Come Back!)

Simple lifestyle changes could help soothe the pain of arthritis before it even starts.

- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Practice 30 minutes of moderate exercise five times a week to help joints stay limber.
- Monitor and control your blood sugar.
- Wear protective gear for your joints when playing sports.
- Avoid smoking and other environmental triggers.
- Get adequate sleep every night.
- Educate yourself in family history and signs of arthritis.
- If symptoms appear, talk to your family doctor.
- Remember: Early recognition is key for successful treatment!

SOURCES: Arthritis Foundation