

ARTHRITIS

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Definition

Arthritis is a term used to describe over 100 conditions that cause damage in a person's joints, causing pain and inflammation in the joints.

The most common areas (joints) where arthritis occurs: knees, hips, wrists and ankles, shoulders, and the lower back.

Types of Arthritis:

- Rheumatoid Arthritis
 - An autoimmune disorder that occurs body's immune system attacks the tissues in the body, affecting the lining of joints and causing painful swelling.
 - Can affect beyond the joints, including the skin, lungs, heart, kidneys, eyes, blood vessels, and more
- Osteoarthritis (the most common type of arthritis)
 - occurs when the cartilage on the ends of bones wears down over time, losing its protective nature and narrowing the joint space
- Other Types:
 - Post-traumatic arthritis, psoriatic arthritis, gout, and ankylosing spondylitis, and juvenile arthritis

Symptoms

Symptoms of Arthritis can vary depending on the type, however, some common symptoms of arthritis include...

1. Joint Pain - Pain that worsens with movement or prolonged activity
2. Stiffness - can be especially noticeable in the morning or after sitting still for a prolonged period
3. Joint Swelling - joints may appear swollen or feel tender to the touch
4. Redness and Warmth - affected joints may appear red and feel warm to the touch due to an increase in blood flow
5. Reduced Range of Motion - difficulty fully moving the joint or completing normal activities
6. Fatigue and Malaise - particularly noticeable in rheumatoid arthritis, where the immune system is involved

If you or someone you know is experiencing these symptoms, contact your healthcare provider for an accurate diagnosis and appropriate management.

Risk Factors



Poor Diet

Diets high in processed foods, unhealthy fats, and refined sugars increase inflammation



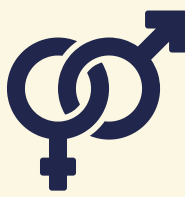
Physical Inactivity

Sedentary lifestyle reduces muscle strength and joint flexibility, worsening symptoms



Age

Individuals over the age of 50 are more likely to develop arthritis due to wear and tear



Sex

Arthritis is more prevalent among women due to hormones and joint structure



Obesity

High body weight increases stress on joints such as the knees and hips, increasing risk

Population at Risk

Key Facts

- 58.5 million U.S. adults affected by arthritis (1 in 5).
- By 2040, prevalence expected to rise to 78.4 million.
- Leading cause of disability in the U.S.

High-Risk Groups

- Adults 50+ years old.
- Individuals assigned female at birth.
- Athletes and people with physically demanding jobs.
- Urban residents due to lifestyle factors.

Georgia-Specific Data

- 1.89 million adults (25.4% of population) diagnosed with arthritis.
- Nearly 1 million report arthritis-related activity limitations.

Urban vs. Rural

- Urban residents:
 - Higher obesity rates.
 - Limited safe exercise spaces.
 - Greater reliance on fast food.
- Rural residents:
 - Better mobility and coping mechanisms.



Prevention

While no measures can completely cure or prevent the onset of arthritis, measures can be taken to reduce one's risk. These measures can also help to minimize discomfort and the severity of symptoms in those who already have arthritis

Diet

The Mediterranean diet is recommended for those who have or at risk for arthritis. This diet includes

- Fatty fish such as tuna, salmon, and sardines
 - Having a high ratio of omega-3 to omega-6 acids can help with inflammation
- Fruits and vegetables
 - High in antioxidants
- Legumes and other lean protein sources
 - Can help maintain muscle mass and strength

Exercise

Maintaining a healthy weight is essential, as being overweight places additional strain on joints

- Low impact exercises and light weight training should be prioritized to keep pressure off joints
- Reduces risk of CVD, which those with arthritis are at an increased risk of



Treatment

Medications

- Pain Relievers: Over-the-counter (e.g., acetaminophen, ibuprofen) and prescription options.
- Anti-inflammatory Drugs: NSAIDs (nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) to reduce pain and inflammation.
- Corticosteroids: Pills or injections to quickly reduce inflammation.
- Disease-Modifying Anti-Rheumatic Drugs (DMARDs): For autoimmune-related arthritis like rheumatoid arthritis.
- Biologic Agents: Target specific immune system pathways in inflammatory arthritis.

Physical Therapy

- Exercise Programs: Low-impact exercises (walking, swimming) to improve joint flexibility and strength.
- Stretching and Range-of-Motion Exercises: Maintain mobility and prevent stiffness.
- Assistive Devices: Splints, braces, or shoe inserts to support joints.

Alternative Therapies

- Acupuncture: May help reduce pain in some individuals.
- Heat and Cold Therapy: Alleviate stiffness and pain.
- Massage: Promotes relaxation and improves circulation.

Lifestyle Modifications

- Weight Management: Reduce stress on weight-bearing joints.
- Dietary Changes: Anti-inflammatory diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and omega-3 fatty acids.
- Regular Physical Activity: Low-impact aerobic exercises to improve overall joint health.

Surgical Options

- Joint Repair: Smoothing or realigning joint surfaces.
- Joint Replacement: Replacement of damaged joints with artificial ones (e.g., hip or knee replacement).
- Joint Fusion: For smaller joints, fusing bones to reduce pain.

Other Interventions

- Education Programs: Learn techniques to manage symptoms and improve quality of life.
- Pain Management Programs: Address chronic pain through cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) or relaxation techniques.
- Support Groups: Connect with others facing similar challenges.

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