

What is Arthritis?

Arthritis comprises more than 100 different rheumatic diseases and conditions, the most common of which is osteoarthritis. Other frequently occurring forms of arthritis include rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, fibromyalgia, and gout. Common symptoms include pain, aching, stiffness, and swelling in or around the joints. Some forms of arthritis, such as rheumatoid arthritis and lupus, can affect multiple organs and cause widespread symptoms.

Causes of Arthritis

If you have arthritis something has gone wrong with your joint(s). What goes wrong depends on what type of arthritis you have. It could be that the cartilage is wearing away, a lack of fluid, autoimmunity (your body attacking itself), infection, or a combination of many factors. Although arthritis is more common among adults aged 65 years or older, people of all ages (including children) can be affected. Nearly two-thirds of people with arthritis are



younger than age 65. Arthritis is more common among women (24.4%) than men (18.1%) in every age group, and it affects members of all racial and ethnic groups.

Risk Factors

Certain factors have been shown to be associated with a greater risk of arthritis. Some of these risk factors are modifiable while others are not.

Non-modifiable risk factors

- **Age:** The risk of developing most types of arthritis increases with age.
- **Gender:** Most types of arthritis are more common in women; 60% of all 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, such as rheumatoid arthritis (RA), systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), and ankylosing spondylitis.

Modifiable risk factors

- **Overweight and Obesity:** Excess weight can contribute to both the onset and progression of knee osteoarthritis.
- **Joint Injuries:** Damage to a joint can contribute to the development of osteoarthritis in that joint.
- **Infection:** Many microbial agents can infect joints and potentially cause the development of various forms of arthritis.
- **Occupation:** Certain occupations involving repetitive knee bending and squatting are associated with osteoarthritis of the knee.

Diagnosis

Most of these diseases are clinically diagnosed using the patient’s history, physical examination, and selected, supportive radiographic and laboratory studies. Only a few of these diseases (e.g., gout) have a definitive diagnosis.

Source: Centers for Disease Control
<http://www.cdc.gov/arthritis/basics/general.htm>

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Treatments

Non-inflammatory types (e.g., osteoarthritis) are usually treated with pain medications, physical activity, weight loss (if overweight), and self-management education. Inflammatory types (e.g., rheumatoid arthritis) are treated with these modalities as well as anti-inflammatory medications (corticosteroids and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)), disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs (DMARDs), and a relatively new class of drugs known as biologic agents.

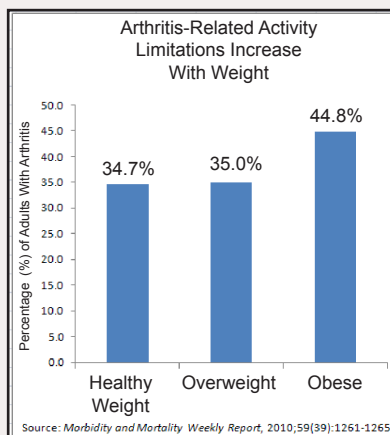
Physical therapy and occupational therapy help maintain joint mobility and range of motion. What kind of therapy will depend on many factors, such as the severity and type of arthritis you have, your age, and your general state of health. This has to be decided by you with your physician and physical or occupational therapist.

People with arthritis will often avoid moving the affected joint because of the pain. A physical therapist can help the patient work out the joint stiffness without damaging it. In order to perform your daily activity the physical therapist

will help you achieve a good range of motion. This may involve building strength in the muscles that surround the affected joint – stronger muscles help stabilize a weakened joint. You will also be taught the best way to move from one position to another, as well as learning how to use such walking aids as crutches, a cane or a walker, if you need one.

Occupational therapy can teach you how to reduce the strain on your joints as you go about your daily activities. The occupational therapist can help you modify your home and workplace so that your movements do not aggravate your arthritis.

Because obesity is a factor in limiting activity, nutritionists can devise a weight reduction plan and provide healthy meal choices.



Bethany HomeHealth Can Help

In collaboration with the primary care giver, Bethany Home Health physical and occupational therapists employ a number of techniques to help manage the daily pain and debilitation of arthritis including methods discussed in the previous paragraphs, as well as the use of ice packs, and heating pads that reduce pain and muscle spasms.

Bethany nurses help patients manage their disease in their homes by providing:

- Coordination of medicine.
- Medical management of other health conditions the patient may have in conjunction with arthritis.
- Educational information for the family caregiver, including tips on daily management of arthritis.
- Treatment evaluation and recommendations.
- Goal-oriented assessments.

Home Health Aides provide assistance with daily living activities:

- Hygiene assistance
- Light meal preparation
- Impaired mobility assistance

Source: Medical News Today: <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/7621.php>

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