

Arthritis

“Walk in all the ways that the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live and prosper and prolong your days in the land that you will possess.” Deuteronomy 5:33

Arthritis is the inflammation of the joints. **Arth** from the Greek meaning joint, and **it is** meaning inflammation or infection. Two common types of arthritis are Osteoarthritis (OA) and Rheumatoid arthritis (RA). Fibromyalgia, gout, and lupus fall into the arthritis category, but we will concentrate on the two best known types. Presently there are 46 million people in American with diagnosed arthritis. It is not limited to adults—almost 300,000 children in the U.S. under age 18 have some type of arthritis.

The most common symptoms of arthritis are joint pain and stiffness, but there can also be swelling, redness, and a decreased range of motion. These can occur suddenly or gradually. Arthritis is a chronic disease, and symptoms can flair up and then ease. It cannot be “cured,” but there are many good strategies to help manage it.

Risk factors for arthritis include advanced age, being female, a family history of arthritis, obesity, injury to a joint, and occupations with repetitive knee bending. There are things you can do to reduce the likelihood of developing arthritis, such as keeping your weight at an appropriate level, and protecting your joints from injury or overuse.

Arthritis can be diagnosed by a physician based on symptoms, medical history, x-rays, and blood work. Be aware that a person can have more than one type of arthritis. If you suspect you have arthritis, it is important to be diagnosed and start treatment. This can prevent damage to your joints and eliminate pain now and in the future.

Treatment includes moderate activity—at least 30 minutes five days a week. Moderate activity is something that slightly increases breathing and heart rate. It doesn't have to be boring—think outside the box: gardening, dancing, and washing your car can all be types of moderate activity! This will actually decrease pain and improve the function of the joints. The more overweight you are, the more likely you are to develop arthritis, so keep your weight under control. Work with a doctor—there are many anti-inflammatory drugs available that will reduce the symptoms and progress of arthritis. Anti-inflammatory medications can be prescribed by your physician, and can increase your quality of life greatly.

These sites are terrific resources for those who wish to educate themselves and help keep their disease under control. Check out the **Arthritis Foundation Self Help Program** at: www.arthritis.org/self-help-program.php This free site can help you deal with the physical and emotional challenges that arthritis can present.

Beware of miracle cures—do your research. While some nutritional supplements can be beneficial, other popular cures such as raisins soaked in gin, have no proven effects (other than making you a little tipsy!) Glucosamine and Chondroitin can stop joint degeneration and ease pain. It will take about two months before the results can be felt, but this is a supplement that is well worth your money.

So, work with your doctor and take the steps needed to keep arthritis symptoms under control, so you can enjoy an active and healthy life.

Blessings and stay active!!

Nurse Karen